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ABSTRACT

Articles in this journal issue focus on aspects of writing instruction and research. The articles discuss the following topics: (1) recent changes in the teaching of composition, (2) a writing sequence for the junior high/middle and secondary school English curriculum, (3) 10 writing-for-learning tasks to use throughout the curriculum, (4) writing and learning, (5) meaning versus correctness in writing, (6) group conferences in large composition classes, (7) how to make writing conferences work, (8) how to teach the research paper, (9) poetry in the elementary school, (10) writing journals (11) prewriting, (12) moving nonmainstream children into the fictive mode, (13) making the transition from expressive to transitional writing, (14) a student writing project, (15) an individual approach to spelling, (16) two methods of using reading in a writing class, (17) the applicability of cognition and writing research to instruction, and (18) what secondary school teachers should know about children's writing. A section of teaching ideas is included in the journal. (HTH)

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What We Know about the Teaching of Writing

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Two Stacks Later: Composition

Patricia P. Kelly and Robert C. Small, Jr.
Guest Editors

Webster defines it as "arrangement into proper proportion or relation and esp. into artistic form." As a noun it means "an intellectual creation." For too many of our students, however, it still means a painful, pointless exercise leading to negative criticism by a teacher and possibly public humiliation. It has always been so, but it need not be any longer so. In this issue, teachers of writing focus our attention on what we know about writing and illustrate the wealth of exciting strategies available to us to turn theory into successful practice.

For the past seven years the Virginia Writing Project, which has seven sites throughout the state, has directly influenced many teachers. Through the projects, teachers have shared their strategies, added new ones, learned theory to support their practices, and become classroom researchers themselves as they seek answers for the questions they raise. As the projects begin to focus on writing across the curriculum, English teachers will be joined by colleagues in other disciplines in using writing as a learning strategy.

This change in the way we view the purpose of writing may be the most significant curriculum developments in this decade. Most of us were taught writing as a skill necessary for a successful academic and professional career; our teachers saw their purpose as helping us succeed in college freshman writing. We now know that writing is a powerful way to learn because writing engages the eye, the brain, and the hand in one simultaneous process. We use writing to help students understand the content of our discipline, English, but this notion that writing helps learning is getting teachers in all disciplines and at all grade levels involved with writing.

Teaching the process of writing is now the basis for our instruction. But we also know that, although there are commonalities within the process, writers' processes differ. Some of us are comfortable with messy cross-outs on scraps of paper and writing on the back and up the side; others need yellow paper, a certain pen, and a favorite place. The writing process is like a symphony. We hear variations on the "musical theme" repeated throughout. In teaching writing we focus on the "theme" of the process, the major components common to the process, but we allow, indeed encourage, the variations. No one approach fits all writers. Whether we view that as a bane or a blessing, the beauty or the frustration of teaching writing, we do agree that the complexity of the writing process requires more than teaching topic sentences, sentence variety, and punctuation.

Perhaps one of the major shifts in teaching writing is the current emphasis on prewriting, which was all but ignored in earlier approaches when assignments were made and collected on Friday. Although somewhat of a misnomer because prewriting involves writing and it also occurs throughout the writing process, prewriting is thinking; it is what writers do to generate content, to find a focus, to determine the form. Whether it is called "cooking," incubation, rehearsal, discovery, or heuristics, prewriting accounts for the major portion of the writing process. Donald Murray has estimated that 70 to 85 percent of the writing process is prewriting of some type. We now have a vast repertoire of strategies that help students prepare for their writing, develop multiple views, define their audience, search their personal experience, and heighten their powers of observation. Unlike outlining, which assumed we knew what we wanted to say and only needed to organize it and which we usually carried out after our papers were finished, we can offer our students a variety of ways to generate content for their writing.

"Writing is revising" some wise person once observed, yet our students for the most part see revisions as "copying over" or, at most, correcting a misspelled word, adding a capital letter, inserting a comma (often in the wrong place). Writing is a lonely act, which may be one reason why students avoid it whenever possible. Revision, however, does not have to be lonely, for we have discovered that revision groups and properly timed and helpfully conducted teacher conferences can provide responses and, perhaps more important, the concrete sense of audience which inexperienced writers cannot provide for themselves.

However, one of the most comforting things we have learned in recent years is that we should not grade everything that a student writes. In the past the amount of writing our students did was limited by the hours in a week we could devote to grading and to the amount of guilt we could handle when we did not get the papers back promptly. We now know that this over-emphasis on evaluation not only discourages our having students write as much as they should but also prevents the extensive practice they need before writing something that "counts." We now feel free to have students write more than we can, or should, grade.

Recently during a workshop teachers were asked their goals for a writing program. Predictable goals were offered, some good, some not so good. One glaring omission, however, was that writing should be pleasurable. We believe that students should read for pleasure; indeed that is a goal for teaching literature. But most of us were taught writing in ways that made it anything but pleasurable; and, if we write for pleasure, it is probably despite the instruction we received not because of it. Writing is a slow process, but reading a book is also. If we do one for enjoyment, why not the other? Writing is a struggle; the pleasure comes from having written something well. We need to help our students experience what Dorothy Parker said: "I like having written."

A Writing Sequence for the Junior High/Middle and Secondary School English Curriculum

John H. Bushman

Writing, or at least the teaching of writing, has become one of the "hottest topics" for writers in professional journals as well as for speakers at national conventions. They write and speak about this model or that model, the revision process, the pitfalls and the benefits of keeping a journal, to mention only a few of the many topics; but few, it seems to me, address the concern for sequencing writing activities so that pre-adolescents in the middle grades are not expected to complete the same writing tasks that adolescents in the upper grades are asked to complete. I believe that teachers intellectually know that these two sets of students should not be expected to be at the same level of skill development and, therefore, should not be expected to do the same tasks; however, something breaks down between the "knowing" and the "doing."

It is a frustrating experience. The middle level students, for example, are not successful since in all probability they are asked to do something that they are not intellectually capable of doing. The upper level students, too, are turned off by writing because they have not been successful over the years; and the teachers are about ready to give up because they do not know where to turn for a successful experience in teaching writing.

Two major changes in how we view curriculum development and the teaching of writing have contributed to making sequencing in the writing program a reality. These changes are 1) a shift in a knowledge-based philosophy of curriculum development to a philosophy based on human growth and development and 2) a shift from a product-based to a process-based approach to teaching writing. I will address each of these very briefly.

In a knowledge-based curriculum, the subject matter is simply assigned to a certain grade level and taught at that level regardless of the ability of the students to comprehend the subject matter. For example, the topic sentence, the thesis statement, or a three-paragraph theme may be assigned to the eighth grade as curriculum to be taught and mastered before students are allowed to go on to the next grade level. A strong case can be made that there are many eighth graders in many schools who are not intellectually ready to learn and to use those particular writing components. The grammar

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program is a classic example of content which is divided among grade levels regardless of students' ability to learn the concepts. In contrast, in the approach based on human growth and development, the writing activities are presented consistent with the students' abilities to understand and to do them. As a result, teachers are able to offer a variety of activities to younger students which will provide a solid foundation for more structured, sophisticated writing that follows in later years.

The shift from product to process orientation in teaching writing enables teachers to focus on various parts of the process, thereby creating more freedom for students to experiment with their language. In this way, students are able to practice their writing, develop confidence, and establish fluency before they are concerned with a finished product. The fear of having to "get it right" the first time is removed. The pre-write, rewrite model, which is frequently found with those who teach process writing, encourages the writer to gather ideas, to play with the most effective ways of expressing those ideas, to write first and second drafts, and to revise writing—all before creating the final product.

So the change of sequencing in the writing program is strengthened by this shift in philosophy Teachers are now able to take what they know about the writing process and to provide experiences that are based on what young people can learn and do at any given age. In doing this, teachers have become more aware of the physical, emotional, and cognitive characteristics of pre-adolescents and adolescents and how these characteristics affect the teaching of writing.

Physical, Emotional, Cognitive Characteristics

Preadolescents are people in transition. They are no longer children; nor are they adult. The journey they take through their "growing up" period may be the most frustrating time of their lives. It is for this reason that we must understand 10 to 17 year olds not only so that we can better relate to them, but also so that we can build a curriculum that will meet their needs and interests. It is vitally important to know that the curriculum for the pre-adolescent is not the same as the curriculum for the older adolescent.

Of all the changes that do occur during this period between childhood and adult, physical growth may be the most noticeable. Tremendous growth spurts and sexual development may cause these young people embarrassment as their bodies make such drastic changes. Emotionally, young people, especially pre-adolescents, are quite unstable. In any given 30-minute period, they can be creative, then dull; cooperative, then obnoxious; energetic, then lifeless; and childlike, then adult. In addition the group is very important for young people, and they often turn to it for some stability in their unstable world. In the cognitive area, pre-adolescents and adolescents reflect a variety of thinking levels. Most of the pre-adolescents (10-12 years) are still in the concrete operational period while most adolescents (13-19 years) are moving into the formal operational period. The cognitive development of young people is of primary concern as we think about a writing curriculum sequence over grades 5 through 12; therefore, additional discussion of this area follows.

Jean Piaget (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969), perhaps more than anyone else, has helped us understand how young people think. Piaget argues that the cognitive changes from infant to adult are the result of a developmental process—a process that occurs in four stages: the sensorimotor period (0-2 years), the preoperational period (2-7 years), the concrete operational period (7-12 years), and the formal operational period (12 years to adult). It is the concrete and formal operational periods that most concern us in the junior high/middle and secondary writing programs.

Generally, during the concrete operational stage, children become more independent in their thinking. They can think logically, they can classify, and they can show relationships. Real experience is very important to them. Their thinking revolves around immediate and concrete objects rather than concepts and abstractions. As adolescents move into formal operations, they are able to apply logical operations to all classes of problems. These adolescents are able to reason about abstract objects and concepts that they have not directly experienced. While this is a very brief overview of a very broad, complex theory of cognitive development, it does offer a basis for a writing sequence for the junior high/middle and secondary schools.

The Writing Sequence

It seems to me that teaching writing in junior high/middle and secondary schools should occur in a five-stage sequence. This five-stage writing curriculum takes into account the intellectual and experiential levels of young people in that students are asked to perform consistently with what we know or at least think we know about the pre-adolescent and the adolescent. In addition, this curriculum model—Prewriting, Experimental Writing, Focused Writing, Revision, and Structured Writing—incorporates the three-step sequence of prewriting, writing, rewriting which is frequently found in the process approach to teaching writing (Bushman, 1984). The curriculum sequence is a writing program to be taught over a period of five to seven years. The three-step sequence is a process that is used each time someone writes.

I suggest this curriculum sequence in order that English teachers can structure their writing program so that it offers different experiences for young people in the middle grades than it offers to students in upper grades. This has not always been the case. Writing assignments that call for rather sophisticated writing and abstract reasoning frequently are found in the middle level. I have heard horror stories of 5th, 6th and 7th graders having to write full-fledged "term papers" with all the component parts. Ample research exists to suggest that these ten, eleven and twelve year olds are still at the concrete operational level and are using thinking processes which involve mostly categorizing and labeling as well as depending greatly on direct observation for the generation of ideas. They are simply not ready—not intellectually nor experientially—for the formal language manipulation as well as the confrontation with such tightly woven structure that comes with such a writing task.

This suggested sequence fosters growth—growth in the way students use language to express themselves and growth in the kinds of writing that take place. Early in the sequence, students play with their language, making it fresh and alive (Prewriting stage); they write frequently without concern for grammatical or mechanical conventions as they begin to establish fluency. This frequently occurs as journal writing (Experimental writing stage). As fluency is developed, students zero in on one idea as they write. They put aside the practice writing and work to develop one idea well (Focused writing stage). As the writing progresses, students rework their writing. They get feedback about what they have written from their peers as well as from the teacher. They take this criticism, evaluate it, and decide how they will revise what they have written (Revision stage). As students mature in their writing, they move to a more sophisticated type of writing—writing in which the student must join content and structure effectively (Structured writing stage). While these five stages may occur sequentially in a single writing/English class, they will best serve the students if the writing sequence is spread throughout the middle and secondary grades.

The Middle Level

One of the major concerns of teachers at this level is the negative attitude that students have toward writing. Because of previous unsuccessful writing experiences, many students despise putting pencil to paper. For this reason, the writing sequence starts with much time spent on prewriting activities to help remove these inhibitions toward writing that have been established. Students spend substantial amounts of time collecting effective uses of language from a variety of sources. They work, too, at creating their own effective language. They create bumper stickers, book titles, license plates, and word puzzles in an attempt to make their language fresh and alive and, at the same time, to help them see that working with language can be fun. Emphasis at this time is on what is right and exciting about language, not on what is wrong with language. There is much verbal interaction during this time as well. Students need time for structured talk—talk which generates ideas for use when they begin writing. The time spent in the Prewriting stage varies with the needs and abilities of students. Perhaps the best way to know when to have students move on and to begin writing is when they are comfortable creating language, securing examples of effective language and sharing these examples with their peers.

The middle level students must have the opportunity to communicate about self in an atmosphere that is built around respect for each other's ideas and feelings. The Experimental stage offers students an opportunity to move in that direction. The writing here is personal and usually related to real life experiences. The writing flows without regard to structure or form. During this time, students work in small groups to find qualities of good writing that they are using. The writing in this stage is not qualitatively evaluated. Students are free to express themselves in any way that seems appropriate to them at that time. They explore their feelings and emotions through this writing. A major characteristic of middle level students is that they are primarily interested in themselves. Many agree that this egocentrism should be explored in the classroom. The Experimental stage does just that.

The journal is also a part of this stage and is appropriate for the middle level student. It encourages fluency in writing, emphasizes non-evaluative writing and offers a place to share ideas and feelings. Because of these factors, the journal frequently becomes an important part of the middle level students' writing program.

The research on the pre-adolescent clearly reflects the need for peer approval. In light of that research, teachers should be aware of the usefulness of groups for the middle level students. Small support groups can be an integral part of the writing program. The group can provide an audience for students' writing, a source for generating ideas, a support team to aid in revision, and a place for critical thinking, the latter primarily at the higher grade levels in the middle range.

The Focused stage is also found in the middle level writing curriculum. It can also be thought of as a transitional stage since it meets the needs of two sets of students: those at the upper end of the middle level range and those at the lower end of the upper level range. Focused writing is personal and is usually in the narrative mode. Again, as in the Experimental stage, activities draw upon the experiences of the writers. In the Focused stage, students are asked to write with excitement, to continue to experiment with their language, and to develop their authentic voice but to do it while focusing on specific ideas. The intent is to use what has been gained in the Experimental stage as students emphasize the selection, organization, and presentation of their ideas. The emphasis now is to help students to be more selective in what they write, to determine the "hook" or "angle" they wish to use to organize their ideas, and to suggest alternatives in effective presentations.

The Secondary Level

The research, especially that from Piaget, seems to indicate that students in the upper grades, or in what we commonly call the high school, usually can reason at the formal operational level. The writing program should reflect that intellectual ability. In general these students have reached intellectual maturity and are able to think in a systematic way, to reason by implication at the abstract level, and to bring together variables through synthesis.

Revision, the fourth stage of the writing sequence, plays an important part in these students' writing program. While students in the middle level do begin revising their work, the bulk of the revision takes place in the upper grades. It seems to be more effective if students spend mo . of their writing time at the middle level simply practicing writing by writing as many different pieces as possible without spending much time with one particular piece. This approach changes considerably in the upper grades when the emphasis is shifted to revision. While some of the concrete level editing—capitalization, terminal punctuation, commas in series, use of the hyphen, use of italics, use of quotation marks—occurs at the middle level, most of the revision—use of phrases, concept of subordination, fragments and run-ons, sentence variety, parallel construction, patterns of organization, paraphrasing—is tackled by upper level students.

Because of the sequential nature of this writing curriculum and because of the cognitive development of adolescents, senior high students are ready for Structured writing, the fifth stage. This final stage completes the sequence and gives balance to the total writing program. I strongly believe, based on what we know about the development of students' thinking processes and what we know about the writing process, that structured or expository writing cannot and should not be taught earlier in the writing program. The hypothetical reasoning which is usually found in the adolescent who has moved into the formal operational stage is a vital part of this more formal writing. Therefore, students who have not attained this reasoning power may be frustrated with and usually unsuccessful in the writing if expository writing is begun too early.

Structured writing demands a rather high degree of sophistication. The difficulty arises as students struggle with the manipulation of two important components: content and form. Through the Experimental and Focused stages, students have been more at ease with their writing because much of the content has come from experience or at least general knowledge of the subject matter and the form has not been a restrictive force. It is because of this relationship of form and content that Structured writing should be handled by upper level students.

There are many creative, useful writing activities which help students to come to grips with content and form. Formal letters, reports, reviews, letters to the editor, formal speeches, and news articles emphasize logical thinking processes as do the more traditional research papers, general themes, and the five-paragraph essay; but the creative approaches are much more interesting and relevant to high school students.

To write literary responses from a selection read is also a normal part of the senior high writing curriculum. Students should be able to make a statement or pose a problem about a work. They should be able to defend or solve that particular response, and thereby show the level of reasoning or writing skill appropriate for students who have moved into the formal operational level. These literary responses are important and appropriate as long as they are balanced with other writing activities.

I believe that this writing sequence is important in order for students to be successful writers. But one teacher cannot do it alone. There must be a collective effort by teachers, administrators, and curriculum directors. Middle and secondary level educators must see a need for cooperation so that both levels are actively involved in teaching young people to write. The benefit from this writing sequence, in addition to producing better writers, is that each level has certain, clearly stated responsibilities in the total writing program. As a result, learning to write does not have to be completed by grade 9, 7, or 6; but it occurs step by step in a process that takes many years with each grade level making very important contributions to that process.

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Developing Thinking Processes: Ten Writing-For-Learning Tasks Throughout the Curriculum

Denny Wolfe
Carol Pope

> *Unless and until the mind of the learner is engaged, no meaning will be made, no knowledge can be won.*
>
> —Ann Berthoff, "Is Teaching Still Possible? Writing, Meaning, and Higher Order Reasoning," *College English* (December 1984), p. 744.

Much has been written recently, in professional journals and elsewhere, about writing as a powerful way of learning in all school subjects.[1] Many teachers who have read this literature, or who simply have heard about the concept of writing to learn, are generally persuaded that writing is indeed an important way of realizing, clarifying, defining, reflecting, imagining, inventing, inquiring, organizing, interpreting, discovering, decision-making, problem-solving, and evaluating—in short, an important way of thinking and learning. Nearly any successful learner can attest to that fact. If it is true that we learn by hand (action), eye (image), and brain (making and revising meaning through language), then writing is significant as a learning and teaching method because it is the only language process that involves all three of these functions simultaneously.[2]

John Dewey famously observed that we learn what we do. An apt corollary might be that we own what we learn; otherwise, real learning does not occur at all— beyond test day, anyway. Providing students with experiences that require the development of their thinking abilities is obviously crucial to the educational process in any discipline and at all grade levels. Just as writing and instruction in writing aid the development of fluency, thinking and guidance in thinking aid the development of learning. Writing is a tool by which critical and creative thinking abilities are acquired, developed, and honed. For example, when students are thinking—really thinking—they use their own language (not the teacher's or someone else's) to formulate ideas, opinions, perspectives, and conclusions. Manipulating language and

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symbols in the head and putting words on paper enable students to order information and make meanings.

Thinking and learning are enhanced by using writing to organize information, sequence it, analyze it, study relationships, and perceive errors in logic. Dialectical thinking—the process which examines how bits of information or sets of assumptions prove and disprove each other—is also developed when students apply critical thinking abilities to explore, through writing, possible outcomes of alternative choices and decisions.

Perception is another important thinking ability to be addressed through writing—that thinking ability which Edward de Bono calls "first-stage thinking."[3] Students explore and think about their perceptions in order to understand how they make meaning of their observations. Berthoff declares that at this stage, "Students can discover that they are already thinking; by raising implicit recognitions to explicit differentiations, they can, as it were, feel the activity of their minds."[4] In addition, recording perceptions as they explore and think about them helps students make the process of generalizing tangible and accessible for reconsideration.

Following are ten concrete suggestions for teachers to consider as ways of helping students use writing as a vehicle for learning throughout the disciplines and across grade levels. These suggestions, taken as a whole, can enhance the development of thinking abilities by requiring students to explore what they know and do not know, generalize to determine assumptions and principles, and/or apply these assumptions and principles within a variety of contexts. The primary advantage of these suggested writing tasks is that they invite students to become active participants in their learning by ordering and making meaning of prior knowledge, as well as inventing new knowledge—that is, knowledge which is new to them, if not to the world.

Writing to Identify Personal Goals

Administrators and supervisors expect teachers to establish instructional goals; a fitting corollary, therefore, is that teachers should expect students to establish learning goals. At the beginning of a term (a semester or a grading period)—even at the beginning of a week—teachers might ask students to write down several goals which they hope to achieve during that period of time. The goals may have to do with keeping up with assignments better, reading more, studying more at home, working to improve study skills, paying closer attention in class, talking less to one's peers at inappropriate times, participating more fully in class discussions, seeking needed help from teachers and others, and organizing to get things done more effectively. These are mere examples; if the goal-setting is to be useful, students must think inventively and introspectively about their own needs and interests. The goals should address school-related matters, focusing on academic learning.

Writing to Comprehend Reading Material

Underlining is a common practice in "academic" reading. But even if they do not underline, most readers develop some idiosyncratic system for noting what's important in material they read. Responding through writing may be a far more effective way of comprehending and remembering than underlining, making abbreviated marginal notes, or copying. Writing is also a powerful way by which students can come to have a sense of ownership of concepts and information. Students should be encouraged to write, to digest, to paraphrase, and to interpret what they read. By writing about their reading, students may often better comprehend a sentence, a paragraph, or a longer passage than by other strategies only, such as re-reading or reading at a slower rate than usual. Both during and after reading, students should write to explore and make their own meanings from the printed pages.

Writing to Clarify and Reflect

During any classroom learning activity—listening to a lecture, watching a film, participating in discussions, or engaging in individual projects—teachers might periodically ask students to stop what they are doing in order to write for purposes of clarifying and reflecting. They write to clarify in their minds—in their words—a piece of information, a feeling they might be experiencing, a vaguely formed thought, an image, a direction or a set of directions that might describe a sequence of steps or a generalization. They write to reflect upon what they have done, heard, said, or seen, and upon what lies ahead in a particular learning activity. In this way, students are invited to think about what they have done, are doing, and will do. What students sometimes perform in a mindless, mechanical way in the classroom becomes a thoughtful, provocative, decision-making, problem-solving, and engaging learning task or set of tasks.

Writing to Define One's Own Learning

At the beginning of a lesson or a class, students might be asked to write to remember, to select, and to record what they feel was their most important learning about a given lesson or subject the day before. By focusing attention on previous learning, this kind of writing prepares students for what is coming up next. At the end of a lesson or a class, writing to define one's own learning helps students discover how effective their immediate classroom experiences might have been. And later, when their parents or friends ask, "What-did-you-learn-in school-today?" students may be better prepared to give a refreshingly substantial answer. Finally, teachers can help students use this kind of writing to express how they are learning. In this way, students might gain insights into their own peculiar learning styles and preferred working environments. They might be asked to use this kind of writing to find out what time of day they are most able to work and learn best; how much time they can spend working most productively at a single stretch; whether they work best in absolute quiet or with, perhaps, soft music; whether they work best with others or in groups; and what sort of working place and space they feel they need in order to work most productively and efficiently. Although the structure of schooling obviously cannot altogether accommodate individuals' preferred working styles, students can profit from writing to learn about those styles for efforts they make outside of school.

Writing to Summarize

Writing to summarize means, for example, writing to indicate the structural plot of a story; the most significant information in a textbook chapter or magazine or newspaper article; the major message or point in an essay; the nugget of a lecture, a record, or a tape recording; the visual story line of a film; the hard-won discovery of a laboratory experiment; or the essence of an oral discussion in the classroom. More than the other writing tasks included here, writing to summarize is externally oriented and directed. Although it is a writing task which certainly may have expressive features, it is one in which the writer often is trying to get at the heart of someone else's intention or set of intentions. The student writer's interest here is to reduce something quite large to its lowest terms. Of all the writing tasks among these ten, writing to summarize is probably the most conventional. Students are frequently required to write summaries, but usually such writing is for testing purposes only. What we are suggesting here is (1) writing summaries far more frequently than is currently the case and (2) writing summaries for learning purposes rather than solely for testing purposes.

Writing to Apply

This task is not one which requires students to fill out forms. Rather, it one for which teachers ask students to write about the practical value of their learning. All of the facts students absorb in school, all of the discoveries they make, all of the concepts they acquire, and all of the attitudes they develop must have value beyond the teacher's grade book. But what value? Students are often quite bold in challenging teachers to tell them about the practical value of their learning. This writing task occasionally can place the onus on students to speculate about the utility of what they learn in school. As a result of such writing—if it becomes the basis now and then for classroom discussion—teachers might discover new reasons for what they are teaching. Conversely, teachers might also discover that something they are teaching deserves a much lower (or higher) priority.

Writing to Inquire

For many years educators have been in general agreement about the value of inquiry methods of teaching and learning. Yet, the potential which inquiry holds as a method of instruction has never been fully realized. At least two reasons exist for the limited use and checkered career of inquiry in the classroom: (1) many teachers have given neither themselves nor their students enough time and practice to develop the skills of inquiry; (2) some teaches have over-used the approach (Johnny: "Ms. Smith, may I go the bathroom?" Ms. Smith: "I don't know, what do you think about that?"). Of course, students will not learn to develop curious, inquiring minds if they are not urged—even pressed—to ask questions. Oral language is often not sufficient to promote deep and rich questioning. "Are there any questions?" is a query which frequently is met with silent response. It is often too easy for students to hide in the group and keep quiet. On the other hand, stopping what students are doing (listening to a lecture, viewing a film, reading in class) and asking them to write a question tends to elicit many responses. The questions might have to do with (1) something students do not understand; (2) something they would like to know more about; (3) a speculation about a relationship between what they are working on now and something they have done in the past; or (4) a need to have clarified the purpose regarding why they are doing a particular activity. Of course, many more possibilities exist and will emerge when teachers "de-brief" their students in class after the writing has occurred.

Writing to Plan and Organize

All of us, from time to time, make lists of "things to do." Busy people find this practice necessary—even a means of vocational or professional "survival." Teachers often give students direction and advice about planning and organizing themselves for school work. But beyond the "teacher talk," too many times little else happens. As an important follow-up to such direction and advice, teachers can urge students to prepare weekly plans or schedules, indicating what tasks lie ahead and how students propose to manage their time and energies to get their work done well. In this way, students can use writing to realize the efficacy of planning and organizing as an approach to becoming more effective in their school work, as well as in their lives outside of school. Gradually, many students will learn to depend upon such writing to discover the details of what needs to be done and the best procedures for doing it. As a corollary, this kind of writing enables students to practice decision-making and problem- solving skills—perhaps more than any of the other writing tasks suggested here.

Writing to Meet One's Own Needs and Interests

In the late '60's and '70's, when reading was the language process getting the most attention in educational literature and in "curricular reform," many teachers began to hold "read-ins" in their classes. More elaborately, many schools established what became known as "uninterrupted sustained silent reading" programs. In a great many cases, these practices proved to be enormously successful in getting students to read more and better than before. With writing, these same strategies can be equally effective. Occasionally, teachers can conduct "write-ins" in their classes. Perhaps once a week, teachers can invite students to spend a short amount of time—perhaps ten or fifteen minutes—writing anything of their choosing: a letter, a poem, a personal diary or journal entry, notes to one another, a sketch, an invented dialogue, a stream-of-consciousness piece, a joke, or the like. Students can contribute to the list of possibilities. Two keys to the success of this writing activity are (1) that the teacher also writes and (2) that sometimes an outsider (principal, counselor, community leader) is invited into the classroom to write with students. Students begin to realize that purposes for writing are myraid and that testing is not the only reason for writing. Students also see that adults actually write; they do not just advocate writing. On a larger scale, perhaps once a week or once every two weeks, four short blasts of the school bell will signify a time for "uninterrupted sustained silent writing." Where it is feasible, everybody in the school at that moment—teachers, administrators, visitors, as well as students—stops what he/she is doing and writes for five or ten minutes.

Writing to Evaluate

Finally, at the end of a week or a grading term, teachers can invite students to evaluate their learning over a period of time. Students can ask themselves such questions as: What have I learned? What has been most interesting to me? What has been most useful or valuable to me? How well have I performed? What must I do differently in order to do better? Where have I fallen short, and why? What interferes with my learning, and how can I control the factors which interfere? What do I need to stimulate me to do my best? This kind of writing permits students to take stock of themselves and of their learning experiences. If teachers elect to read this writing (and students frequently will want them to read it), they can gain insights into students' self-concepts as learners, as well as learning behaviors.

Conclusion: Toward Writing-for-Learning in All Disciplines

Admittedly, some overlapping exists among the ten suggestions we have included here, but each has its own distinct focus. Teachers who use these writing-for-learning tasks in their classrooms—and such teachers are rapidly increasing in number—find them helpful as devices for enhancing student achievement across the grade levels and throughout the curriculum. These are, by no means, the only ones available; enterprising teachers will discover and create their own. Such writing tasks are not intended for formal evaluation in the conventional sense. Although teachers may read them and, perhaps, devise ways to reward students for writing, the tasks we have presented here are for learning rather than for testing.

Bob Tierney, for twenty-eight years a biology teacher at Irvington High School in Fremont, California, has reported success with the following approach to using writing as a way of teaching science: (1) determine what the students already understand by having each of them write down one or two things they know about the subject, and poll the class; (2) ask the students to formulate one or two questions they really want answered; (3) give short reading assignments requiring an expressive writing response; (4) set up a lab that lends itself to student exploration, and do not answer any questions during the lab (require the students to write any questions on the lab paper); (5) after the students have indicated interest, outline a lecture to respond to their interest; (6) during the lecture, pause about every ten minutes to allow students to react in writing; (7) assign homework that requires writing-to-think activities; (8) complete the unit with a short essay test.[5] Here is a teacher who has incorporated a variety of writing-for-learning tasks into a cohesive plan for classroom instruction in biology. Other teachers can do—indeed, are doing—likewise.

It is important to think of writing-for-learning tasks, not as isolated assignments or "fillers" for unused class time, but as a series of forays into connected discourse which provides students access to places inside their own heads. That is to say, as Tierney has demonstrated, that various writing-for-learning tasks can be integrated to inform and re-shape the ways by which teachers prepare and organize students' lessons. Most importantly, writing can become a powerful force in helping students personalize knowledge and become active learners.

Notes

[1] For a few examples, see the following: C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon, "Writing as Learning Through the Curriculum," *College English* (September 1983), pp. 465-474; Joan Creager, "Teaching Writing is Every Teacher's Job," *American Biology Teacher* (May 1980), pp. 668-670; Nancy Martin *et al.*, *Writing and Learning across the Curriculum* (Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden, 1979); the entire issue of *Social Education* (March 1979); Williamn Irmscher, "Writing as a Way of Learning and Developing," *College Composition and Communication* (October 1979), p. 416; William Geesling, "Using Writing about Mathematics as a Teaching Technique," *Mathematics Teacher* (February 1977), p. 113.

[2] See Janet Emig's "Writing as a Mode of Learning," *College Composition and Communication* (May 1977), pp. 123-124. See also Emig's "Hand, Eye, Brain: Some Basics in the Writing Process," in *Research on Composing*, Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell, eds. (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1978), pp. 59-71.

[3] "Critical Thinking Is Not Enough," *Educational Leadership* (September 1984), pp. 16-17.

[4] p. 753.

[5] "Writing in Science," *California English* (March-April 1983), p. 9.

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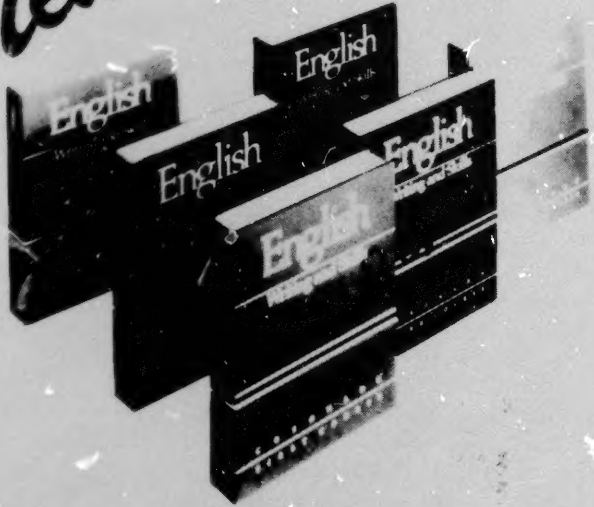

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A Broadened Perception: Writing and Learning

Warren Self

Not long ago, writing in school meant compositions on subjects usually assigned by teachers so students could submit their writing and themselves to a rigorous and sometimes painful evaluation. Students wrote to prove that they had learned something and that they could express their knowledge without factual or grammatical errors. Their school writing functioned primarily for teachers. Students rarely were given reasons to think that writing had any significant function for them.

In 1979 and 1980, Arthur N. Applebee conducted a national study to determine what kinds of writing were being required in all academic disciplines in secondary schools. In Writing in the Secondary School: English and the Content Areas (NCTE, 1981), he reported that less writing was being required than might have been expected and that students were doing only a small amount of writing whose primary function was to facilitate learning. Most school writing was focused on demonstrating what students had already learned. He suggested that teachers' concentrated focus on "writing as a way to express an idea or reveal subject-area knowledge" caused them to ignore writing as a way to help students "generate new ideas 'at the point of utterance' " (a phrase Applebee borrowed from James Britton). As a result of his study, he recommended that teachers create "more situations in which writing can serve as a tool for learning rather than as a means to display acquired knowledge" (pp. 99-100). To effect that change, he called for descriptions of writing activities that facilitate learning. He also called for research that would provide information about the benefits of these writing activities in terms of whether they enabled students to learn more and whether they positively affected students' abilities to write. Even at the time Applebee was issuing this call, some teachers had already begun using writing to facilitate their students' learning, and a few had begun to study the effects of such writing.

Our understanding of what writing is and for whom it can function has deepened greatly in the past fifteen years. The implications of this deeper understanding are effecting enormous changes in education—changes in the role of teachers, the relationships between teachers and students, the shape of the curriculum, and students' perceptions of their roles as learners. One of these changes is that writing is being used by more and more teachers

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as a way of helping students learn. Although this "new" understanding of a function of writing is having a rejuvenating and invigorating effect on education, it is, in fact, not such a new understanding after all. Actually, a rediscovery of a long-valued feature of writing is being validated and enhanced by what cognitive psychologists are saying about learning processes and the possible links between those and writing.

When Janet Emig published her now famous essay, "Writing as a Mode of Learning" [*College Composition and Communication*, 28 (May, 1977), 122-128], she drew on what cognitive psychologists had been saying about how people learn. According to Emig, cognitive psychologists propose that people learn by doing things, by creating images, and by representing experiences wholly symbolically. They also indicate that learning can be enhanced by both immediate and long-term reinforcement. Emig then proceeded to make important onnections between writing and those methods of learning. Writing, she asserted, involves people in all three modes of learning simultaneously, and the product of writing provides both immediate and long-term reinforcement. Thus, her essay, perhaps more than any other single document, instructs us to remember what experienced writers have been saying for hundreds of years—that writing is a valuable and powerful way to learn and that writing is functional primarily for the writer.

Three hundred years ago, Michel de Montaigne published his *Essays*. He did not call his works essays because they had a particular structure or because they fit anyone's preconceived notions about what they should look like. He attempted to "essay" (that is, test) his own nature and understand a wide range of topics by writing about them and himself. The word "essay" truly reflected his sense that writing was a way of coming to understanding. It reflected also his notion that the writing he was doing was functional primarily for himself. Many other writers have indicated that the act of writing has been for them an act of learning. In "Of Studies," Francis Bacon wrote: "Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he need have a great memory; if he confer little, he need have a present wit; and if he read little, he need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not." Joan Didion in "Why I Write," said: "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear." Writers, then, write to learn.

In the October 1984 issue of *College English*, the NCTE Commission on Composition published "Teaching Composition: A Position Statement." That statement begins: "Writing is a powerful instrument of thought. In the act of composing, writers learn about themselves and their world and communicate their insights to others. Writing confers the power to grow personally and to effect change in the world." In a recently published textbook, Literature for Composition (Little, Brown and Company, 1984), edited by Sylvan Barnet et al., a section about why people write contains a statement reflecting Emig's perception, Montaigne's and other writers' testimony, and the NCTE Commission's position that writing is indeed a mode of learning.

> People write not only to communicate with others but also to clarify and to account for their responses to material that interests or excites or frustrates them. In putting words on paper you will have to take a second and third look at what is in front of you and what is within you. And so the process of writing is a way of learning. The last word is never said about complex thoughts and feelings, but when we write we hope to make at least a little progress in the difficult but rewarding job of talking about our responses....
>
> When you write, you transform your responses into words that will let your reader share your perceptions, your enthusiasms, and even your doubts. This sharing is, in effect, teaching. Students often think they are writing for the teacher, but this is a misconception. When you write, you are the teacher. (p. 57)

To say that writing transforms students into teachers is another way of indicating that writing transforms passive students into active thinkers and learners. Most importantly, it suggests that knowledge, understanding, and wisdom cannot be passed along from teachers to students as if these things were commodities. Rather, students must acquire knowledge, understanding, and wisdom through a personal and intense engagement with the subject. Writing provides such engagement.

Using writing as a way of learning about any subject—whether it be biology, algebra, history, literature, or economics—has begun to receive a lot of attention in professional literature written for teachers. A movement, of sorts, to encourage more teachers to use writing-to-learn activities in their classrooms is now a part of American education. Writing across the curriculum programs have been started in many secondary schools and colleges across the United States. Many of these people who coordinate writing across the curriculum programs belong to the National Writing Across the Curriculum Network, and they gather at NCTE conventions and other meetings to share ideas and resources as they attempt to make writing and learning integral activities in their own settings. The National Writing Project and the Virginia Writing Project sites actively seek participants from disciplines other than English language arts for their summer institutes in order to help teachers in all disciplines develop ways to use writing to facilitate students' learning.

In Virginia, the Department of Education is in the midst of a multi-year program that focuses on helping teachers understand how they can employ language activities to help students learn. The writing across the curriculum strand of that program is being conducted in cooperation with the Virginia Writing Project. In describing its program, the Department of Education says:

> Writing Across the Curriculum is based on the proposition that writing—to record, to explain, to learn—is an integral part of the thinking/learning process in any discipline, academic or vocational. In a school with a Writing Across the Curriculum program, teachers of all disciplines discover, develop, and discuss ways of helping students use writing to improve learning. Their students come to view writing as

> a natural and useful way to learn subject matter, discovering content by putting it into their own language and having to think about it in the process. As a result of a Writing Across the Curriculum program, teachers more often become facilitators and directors of learning, rather than transmitters of knowledge and editors of writing; and their students become better learners, better thinkers, and better writers.

Making more use of writing to help students learn requires a broadening of the notion of what school writing is. Students should continue writing essays and reports, perhaps even more than they currently write. But they also need many opportunities to use writing in a different way to express in their own language their emerging understanding of the subjects as they study. They need to express both what they understand fully and confidentially and what they understand only partially and tentatively. Such writing will not resemble edited, polished essays. It will be writing in a new genre that is functional primarily for learners.

Lee Odell calls this genre speculative writing. In a writing across the curriculum workshop at Radford University, he explained his preference for this term by pointing out that this genre provides writers with opportunities to speculate, to test their thinking, to probe a subject as they look for a way into it. It provides students with opportunities to take chances and to explore their ideas without fear of being penalized for being wrong. In another workshop, Mary K. Healy called this same genre first-draft writing because students do not take the writing through multiple drafts. Rather, for their own benefit, students write about something as they study and think about it; their writing is done quickly, without concern for surface features (grammar, spelling, and punctuation, for example), and primarily as a recording of their emerging thinking and knowledge. This writing will usually be messy, tentative, and exploratory. It can lead to insight and understanding immediately, or it can trail off into momentary confusion on the way to understanding. Writers may share it with others, including the teacher, but the first- draft writing should not be critically examined or evaluated. Its purpose is to stimulate and record thinking about the subject being studied.

Another aspect of this new genre is that teachers' relationships with it are very different from those they have with students' final-draft writing, their school essays or reports. Teachers expect final-draft writing to conform to conventions of correctness and to express a well-developed, coherent idea about a subject. Although they may be the most congenial and helpful facilitators as students are working in the drafting, revising, and editing phases of composing, teachers ultimately judge students' performances on final-draft writing.

On the other hand, teachers do not have to read all of the students' first-draft writing, and they surely do not have to judge or grade it. Getting students to do first-draft writing to create their knowledge and express ideas in their own language initiates and reinforces learning. First-draft writing is thinking committed to paper so there is a permanent record of it. People do not want their tentative thoughts evaluated, or graded.

If they want anything, they want helpful response, and often they want and need nothing from others. Tentative and emerging ideas are sometimes best kept to one's self to be mulled over and explored before they are shared with anyone. With first-draft writing, a focus on encouraging students to think, to create their own understandings, and to take intellectual risks replaces a focus on testing and evaluating.

Reading some of the students' first-draft writing in a non-evaluative way can, however, be enjoyable and enlightening for both teachers and students. When students read one another's first-draft writing, they get to see how others in their class are thinking about a subject, and they can learn from one another. When teachers read students' first-draft writing, they get insights into how students are thinking about what they are studying and can see what confuses them and what the nature of their confusion is. That insight into students' thinking allows teachers to adjust instruction to straighten out snarled thinking when it is widespread among students or to respond individually in a quick note in the margin of a student's first-draft thoughts. Although the essential value of this writing is that the students have done it, have thought, and have made some progress toward understanding, clearly a second value is its potential for opening lines of communication and understanding among students and between teachers and students.

Making more first-draft writing a normal part of students' learning also may indirectly help them become better writers of final-draft essays and reports. They will have more writing practice, but more importantly, they will be developing richer understandings from which to write essays and reports. Many teachers who have already begun to use first-draft writing to help students learn have reported how they employ this writing, how they respond to it, and how they and their students perceive its benefits.

The forms that first-draft writing take on are multitudinous. Academic journals, or learning logs, in which students record regularly their responses to reading, lectures, and class discussions have been used by teachers in all academic disciplines. Teachers have asked students to do some first-draft writing at the end, or sometimes in the middle, of their lectures. Students summarize and synthesize, putting into their own language what they understand. They cease being passive recipients of information and become involved in creating their own connections between new information and previously constructed knowledge. Teachers may have some students read aloud what they have written or occasionally may collect the students' first-draft writing to read. Either method allows students to think and to synthesize and enables teachers to see what kinds of syntheses are occurring. Teachers also may do nothing with that writing, letting the students formulate their emerging ideas in a form that allows for later reconsideration and refinement.

To catalog all the ways that first-draft writing is being used to help students learn is not the present purpose. To encourage an exploration of the genre's possibilities is. In the annotated bibliography are several reports from teachers who have begun to use first-draft writing and who have valuable ideas and insights to share. Reading about these teachers' use of first draft-writing and understanding the positive effects this genre has had on them and their students is quite simply inspirational.

Annotated Bibliography

Barr, Mary, Pat D'Arcy, and Mary K. Healy, Eds. *What's Going On? Language/Learning Episodes in British and American Classrooms, Grades 4-13.* Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1982.

Each of the thirteen teachers who contributed to the collection studied how language activities facilitated learning for students in their classrooms. "Language in these teachers' classroom serves learning, as students read and listen to find out, talk and write to discover as well as report" (p. i). Judith Salem, for example, teaches ninth grade math and uses learning logs extensively to facilitate learning. About those logs, she says: "I think it is valuable for student to write their way though examples rather than just read them or watch me do them." She also recognizes a second value in the students' logs: "I try to read the log entries once every week or two weeks. They give me another way of assessing how well students are understanding what we are doing in class. Also, since some find it easier to write criticism of assignments which they found confusing or irrelevant, the log gives me a continuous evaluation of my teaching" (pp. 124-125).

Berthoff, Ann E. *The Making of Meaning.* Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1981.

Berthoff presents a vigorous argument for using writing as a means of bringing order out of the chaos of information received. Understanding that writing and learning are simultaneous, she urges teachers to "help students develop their own powers by assuring that they have occasions to discover that composing is itself a process of discovery and interpretation, of naming and stating, of seeing relationships and making meanings" (p. 20).

Emig, Janet. *The Web of Meaning: Essays on Writing, Teaching, Learning and Thinking.* Eds. Dixie Goswami and Maureen Butler. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1983.

For more than twenty years, Emig has been studying the relationships between writing and learning, and this collection of her essays on the subject reveals how her own progress toward understanding has made it possible for others to follow the trail she has blazed. "Writing as a Mode of Learning" (1977) is among the eleven essays.

Fulwiler, Toby and Art Young, eds. *Language Connections: Writing and Reading across the Curriculum.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1982.

Fulwiler and Young co-directed the writing across the curriculum program at Michigan Technological University, and teachers in various academic disciplines who participated in the program report how they have used writing to facilitate students' learning. Especially helpful for developing an understanding of why first-draft writing can facilitate learning is Randall Freisinger's "Cross-Disciplinary Writing Programs: Beginnings." Toby Fulwiler's "The Personal Connection: Journal Writing across the Curriculum" offers a number of suggestions for using academic journals as a way of regularly including first-draft writing in the learning process.

Martin, Nancy, ed. *Writing Across the Curriculum Pamphlets.* Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1975.

One product of the Schools Council and London University of Education Joint Project on writing across the curriculum was a series of pamphlets that were distributed to teachers. This collection reprints those pamphlets. Of particular interest to those looking for more understanding of how first-draft writing can facilitate learning is the first pamphlet in the series, "From Information to Understanding: What Children Do with New Ideas" by Nancy Martin, Peter Medway, and Harold Smith.

Martin, Nancy, Pat D'Arcy, Bryan Newton, and Robert Parker. *Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum 11-16.* Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1976.

The University of London Institute of Education in cooperation with the Schools Council initiated a writing across the curriculum project in 1971, and under the direction of Nancy Martin, this five-year program helped "teachers of all subjects to try to find ways in which a pupil's writing could more effectively contribute to his personal development and learning" (pp. 10-11). This seminal study makes a strong case for using writing as a way of creating understanding. Especially helpful is the chapter "Making Sense of New Information."

Tchudi, Stephen N. and Susan J. Tchudi. *Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: Elementary School.* Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1983.

Tchudi, Stephen N. and Margie C. Huerta. *Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: Middle School/Junior High.* Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1983.

Tchudi, Stephen N. and Joanne Yates. *Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: Senior High School.* Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1983.

Each book in this series begins with a discussion of how writing can facilitate learning. Especially for content area teachers who are hesitant to begin using writing as part of their instruction, these books open possibilities and suggest strategies. The authors discuss the use of academic journals and learning logs as ways of using first-draft writing to facilitate learning. They also explore ways to move from first-draft writing where students begin to create their understanding to final-draft writing where students continue to refine and present their understanding to readers.

Thaiss, Christopher, ed. *Writing to Learn: Essays and Reflections on Writing across the Curriculum.* Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1983.

This collection of reports on writing-to-learn activities in various academic disciplines is a product of the George Mason Faculty Writing Program and the Northern Virginia Writing Project. In addition to describing uses of first-draft writing, several teachers describe final-draft writing tasks whose focus is on facilitating learning. "Supplementary Sources for Writing across the Curriculum" provides an extensive and valuable list of additional sources to consult.

Wolfe, Denny and Robert Reising. *Writing for Learning in the Content Areas.* Portland, Maine: J. Weston Walch, Publisher, 1983.

A helpful resource available for teachers who are interested in beginning to use writing to facilitate learning, this book begins with a succinct overview, "Writing as a Way of Knowing and Learning." Then follow chapters on writing in the English curriculum, the social studies curriculum, the mathematics/science curriculum, the business curriculum, and the vocational education curriculum. In each chapter, ways to use first-draft writing in journals are complemented by writing tasks that can lead to final-draft writing. The sample writing tasks are useful both as ready-to-use assignments and as models of other tasks that teachers can create.

Making Writing Mean Rather than Making it Right

John W. Swope

Most of us, as teachers of writing, would like to see our students include more rewriting in their composing processes. Unfortunately, we disagree, sometimes passionately, about nearly every aspect of writing. For example, we doubt the best source to initiate rewriting—the student writer, the teacher, or other students. Similarly, we debate what rewriting should first address: content, organization, or grammar and mechanics. We also debate whether students should rewrite in class, in peer group sessions, in teacher-student conferences, or at home. We even disagree about what to call the rewriting phase of composing. In a study of students' rewriting processes, Sommers (1978:16) has pointed out that the terminology associated with rewriting in student textbooks varies; it includes "rewriting," "revising," "editing," "proofreading," "recopying," "changing," "re-doing," and "re-working," among others. More important than resolving the debatable issues, however, is discovering and sharing teaching techniques and rewriting strategies that we, as composition teachers, can present to our students to make rewriting a meaningful and efficient part of their writing process.

Teaching our students to rewrite effectively is not a hopeless cause. Fortunately for teachers of the '80's, composition has become a field where observational studies of people in the act of writing have led to a fuller understanding of complex processes. In turn, the research has led composition theorists to create new theories to better accommodate and explain the researchers' observations. In this article on rewriting, I have examined several areas. First, I have provided an overview of the recursive processes of rewriting followed by Murray's and Nold's theories of revision. I have then turned to the research studies of rewriting processes that both support these theories and characterize how students, as novice writers, rewrite. Having presented the problems that students have with rewriting, I have then returned to research and theory to offer some solutions. As a conclusion, I consider students' lack of commitment to meaning and offer suggestions to enhance such commitment.

The Recursive Nature of Composing

Both Della-Piana (1978) and Sommers (1978) have stated that writers must first sense dissonance before they can begin to rewrite. Although Della-

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Piana uses dissonance in discussing the revision of poetry, his definition applies equally to the revision of prose. Dissonance is "the discrimination or sensing of something in a work that does not match what the poet intends or what the poem itself suggests" (1978:106). Sommers defines dissonance as "a construct to explain how a writer senses the lack of congruence between what a text does and what the writer thinks it should do" (1978:159). For writers to begin the processes associated with rewriting, they must first sense dissonance. Writers may sense dissonance through lexical, syntactic, semantic, or rhetorical cues, through linguistic cues, or through their intuitive sense that the discourse does not match their intentions. An understanding of both the recursive nature of composing and cognitive theory to explain composing offers explanations for the intuitive nature of dissonance.

At one time, composition theory presumed rewriting was the third stage of a linear composing process. That is, rewriting occurred after both prewriting and writing were complete. However, the observational research of both Sommers (1978) and Perl (1978) has established that the complex series of behaviors associated with writing processes recur throughout students' composing.

After completing a study of the composing processes of basic writers, Perl (178) concludes that "composing is a process in flux, a dynamic state that encompasses the interweaving and intermingling of behaviors" (1978:310). And, as a result of a comparative study of the rewriting behavior of both inexperienced student writers and experienced adult writers, Sommers concludes "that revision is not a single discrete stage in the composing process," for it is not characteristically different from the behaviors that occur during the stages of prewriting and writing (1978:158).

The work of these individuals has altered the model of the composing process, changing it from a linear model to a recursive one. In this revised model, composing does occur linearly through time, but the behaviors of the composing process occur in neither a directly linear sequence nor constantly forward rotating cycle. Instead, the process is a complex intermingling of recurring behaviors—a constant dynamic of shifting concerns, from generating and synthesizing ideas at one moment in time to formulating and clarifying them into a communicable form at another.

Two Theories of Revision

Murray (1978A, 1978B) and Nold (1982) offer theories of revision, both consistent with the recursive nature of composing. Donald Murray has stated that "writing is rewriting" and that "rewriting is the difference between the dilettante and the artist, the amateur and the professional, the unpublished and the published" (1978A:85). Before explaining his theory of revision, however, Murray considers his students' reluctance to revise. He feels a portion of student writers' reluctance about rewriting stems from an attitude that they have been taught. He states:

> I suspect the term rewriting has, even for many writers, an aura of failure about it. Rewriting is too often taught as punishment, not as an opportunity for discovery or even an inevitable part of the writing process. Most texts, in fact, confuse rewriting and editing, proofreading, or manuscript preparation. Yet rewriting almost always is the most exciting, satisfying, and significant part of the writing process. (85-86)

As Murray conceives the writing process, the first or discovery draft occurs after the writer has thoroughly explored and limited the subject, developed a point of view, and found a voice to explore the subject. In the draft, "everything seems possible" and the writer "stakes out the territory to explore" (87). After the draft is completed, revision becomes what the writer does "to understand and communicate what has begun to appear on the page" (87).

In re-examining revision, Murray divides it into two editorial acts: *internal revision and external revision*. Internal revision is

> everything writers do to discover and develop what they have to say, beginning with the reading of the completed first draft. They read to discover where their content, form, language, and voice have led them. They use language, structure, and information to find out what they have to say or hope to say. The audience is one person: the writer. (91)

The writer needs to engage in internal revision before addressing external revision. For Murray, external revision

> is what writers do to communicate what they have found they have written to another audience. It is editing and proofreading and much more. Writers now pay attention to the conventions of form and language, mechanics and style. They eye their audience and may choose to appeal to it. They read as an outsider, and it is significant that such terms as *polish* are used by professionals: they dramatize the fact that the writer at this stage in the process may, appropriately, be concerned with exterior appearance. (91)

Murray points out that most writers spend more time on internal revision than on external. Textbooks that stress mechanics and manuscript preparation, however, teach external revision. Research studies (Bridwell, Crowley, Faigley and Witte, Perl, and Sommers) demonstrate the effectiveness of this emphasis upon external revision, for inexperienced writers attend to mechanical correctness and tinker with word choice rather than explore meaning. Internal revision, however, seems consonant with the experienced writers' search for meaning, especially in initial drafts.

Murray states that internal revision explores four aspects of discovery: content, form and structure, language, and voice. Content deals with information in the form of word symbols that connect to other word symbols. Form and content structure ideas, providing order and bringing the writer closer to meaning. Language involves the changes that writers make when they search for words to convey their ideas and to make connections among their ideas. Voice is the "way writers hear what they have to say, hear their point of view towards the subject, their authority, their distance from the subject" (93).

Instead of viewing rewriting as punishment, students need to see revision as a positive source of discovery (Murray, 1978B:56). In our classrooms, we should be able to lead our students toward the discoveries that come from internal revision by directing student writers to consider content, form and structure, language, and voice as sources of dissonance in tentative first drafts.

In a discussion of revision, Nold (1982) divides writing into a hierarchy of ten subtasks, which she groups as conventional, intentional, and mixed. The conventional tasks, which students learn to do first, form the lower end while the intentional tasks form the upper end. The mixed subtasks, occupying the middle range, have characteristics of both conventional and intentional.

The three conventional subtasks involve the form of written language; they may, however, be learned apart from the production of written language. For Nold, these subtasks include motor subtasks (learning to form letters or type), graphical subtasks (spelling and punctuation), and usage (recognizing the differences between spoken and written dialects) (51-16).

At the upper end of the hierarchy are the three intentional subtasks. Nold points out that these subtasks are metacognitive and the last for students to learn. Rhetorical skills are the lowest of the three but include assessment of audience, selection of point of view, and resolution of the mismatches between the requirements of the audience and those of the writer, topic, and purpose. Topical subtasks include determination of what is known about the topic as well as structuring the knowledge once the writer has searched both his memory and external sources. Purposive subtasks form the upper end of the intentional category and define the purpose of the communication (16).

Using her hierarchy, Nold divides revision into two types: "revising to fit conventions and revising to fit intention" (18). The first type of revision occurs when the writer's concerns address either conventional or mixed subtasks. This type of revision is similar to Murray's external revision. The types of rewriting changes that researchers have noted in studies of inexperienced writers seem to be changes associated with revising for conventions. However, the experienced writers in Sommers' study (1978) and the expert adults in Faigley and Witte's (1981) used revision to fit intention.

Research on Rewriting

Observational research of students' composing behaviors both supports the recursive nature of composing and points out the students' often limited perception of what rewriting means. The findings also support the types of revision that both Murray and Nold suggest in their revision theories. The purpose of both Emig's (1971) and Crowley's (1977) research has been to investigate what students do when they write. Sommers (1978), Perl (1978), Bridwell (1979), and Faigley and Witte (1981), however, have directed their research specifically toward rewriting.

Emig (1971) notes that the high school students in her study rarely stopped to contemplate what they had written. She also finds that students do not voluntarily revise school-sponsored writing, the type that most of us ask our students to complete as either essays or essay tests (93).

In a study involving both college freshmen and upperclassmen, Crowley (1977) asked her 84 college freshmen to keep diaries describing their writing processes on essay assignments. She has found that they did little preparation for writing other than thumbing through magazines looking for a stimulus for writing. In terms of rewriting, she notes that students generally completed two drafts. They wrote first drafts straight through, sentence by sentence, proceeding swiftly once they had written a thesis. The second drafts were neatened versions of the first with writers generally paying attention to mechanical corrections and, occasionally, making minor stylistic changes. She also has found that these students tended to put off the writing assignment until the night before it was due (167).

Addressing the students' perception of rewriting, Crowley points out that they view composing as a linear process. Composing is "either automatic, a spontaneous flow of memory generated by the writing idea or generated by the imposition of an organizational pattern—an outline of main and subordinate ideas—which dictates the flow of prose" (167). Further, she observes that "analysis seldom involves consideration of an audience beyond the English teacher, who is conceived as a hunter for mechanical errors" (167). The students' view of composing makes completing the writing assignment analogous to filling a water pail: once they find a spiggot and turn it on, they only turn it off when the water reaches the top. Their concern for mechanical correctness becomes a concern for potability: they are more likely to boil or strain the water than they are to filter it, to freeze it into another form, or let its sediment settle.

In a study of composing processes of unskilled college writers, Perl (1978) has found that these students all consistently use prewriting, writing, rereading, and editing in their composing processes (310). She defines editing as occurring in the midst of writing when the students consider the surface features of language (315). As important as her observation that editing occurred is how it affected the students' writing processes. For editing occurred "almost from the moment they begin writing," although it was more frequent during the writing of second drafts (319). She also notes that these students more often made changes in form than in content. Perl's observations and conclusions point out that a concern for the correctness of form in written discourse can distract the student from generating content at early stages in the writing and that, like the students in Crowley's study, once the draft is nearly completed, its meaning is set. Consequently, rewriting is more often a matter of correctness than making changes in content (319).

In a comparative study of inexperienced student writers and experienced adult writers, Sommers (1978) has found that the students made more changes at the word level than of any other type. After examining the students' compositions and conducting interviews, she concludes that

> the students understand the revision process as a rewording activity. They do so because they perceive words as the unit of written discourse. This is why they concentrate on words apart from their roles in the text. (1980:381)

She also points out that "lexical (word) changes are frequent because economy is the student's goal" (381). That is, the student wishes to reduce needless repetition. She also points out the effect such a view of revision has on the student's rewriting.

> Because students do not see revision as an activity in which they modify and develop perspectives and ideas, they feel that if they know what to say, then there is little reason for making revisions. (382)

In a study of the rewriting patterns of 100 high school students, Bridwell (1980) has found similar patterns of rewriting behaviors. More than half of all changes occurred at the surface and word levels. For her, surface level changes include spelling, punctuation, capitalization, verb and noun inflectional endings, and the spelling out of contractions and abbreviations. Word level changes involve the addition, deletion, and substitution of words as well as the shifting of word order. In her study, she looks at the changes students made on first and final drafts and between the two drafts. Overall, most students made more changes during their composing of first and final drafts than when reading over the initial one. When she compares the numbers of changes during the two draft stages, however, she has found that a greater number of changes occurred when the students composed their final drafts (208).

Bridwell also examines whether frequency of changes affects the quality of the written discourse. She has found that half of the least revised papers fell below the mean score for quality ratings. The most extensively revised papers, however, received quality ratings across the entire range of the quality scale (216). Addressing these findings, she suggests:

> There are developmental differences in both the tendency to revise and the ability to revise successfully. Some successful students had internalized many writing conventions which enabled them to produce relatively successful drafts with few revisions, while others among those with high ratings were among the students who revised most frequently. Their changes typically ranged across the levels and stages investigated in the study. The poorer writers on the other hand, fell into two different camps. Some revised very little, merely re-copying their first drafts, while others revised extensively, but typically only at surface or word levels. They rarely revised their essays as they re-read between drafts, but labored through hundreds of spelling and punctuation changes while writing. (218)

The studies of Crowley, Perl, Sommers, and Bridwell demonstrate that students do make changes as a part of their composing processes. More often, however, these changes involve altering the surface form of words, correcting mechanics, and substituting words. Rarely do either high school or college freshmen students made changes that affect the overall meaning. These four studies illustrate that both high school and college students, as novice writers, focus more on Murray's external revision and Nold's revising for conventions than on Murray's internal revision and Nold's revising for intentions.

While these studies demonstrate students' limited perceptions of rewriting, two studies, investigating the differences between the rewriting changes of inexperienced and experienced writers, suggest that mature writers revise differently. Sommers (1978) has found that inexperienced students view rewriting as rule-governed behavior, as a checklist, and as a rewording activity (86). As rule-governed behavior, revision involves mechanical application of learned rules to the rewriting process. When students view rewriting as a checklist, they dissect and evaluate their writing on a word to sentence level. Their concerns are for the parts but not with the discourse as a whole (86-88). Of these parts, Sommers concludes that the students focus upon lexical changes "because they do not see revision as an activity on the idea level" (89).

Her experienced writers, however, viewed revision from a holistic perspective and recognized it as a recursive process. She reports that "a question which dominates the revision process of these experienced writers is—what does my essay as a whole need for form/balance/rhythm/language/communication?" (140). Sommers infers that experienced writers "see their revision process as a recursive process with different levels of attention and different agenda for each cycle" (140-141). These experienced writers tended to move from concerns for finding form for their argument in the first cycle to concern for style in the later ones. She points out that "the same objectives and sub-processes are present in each cycle, *but in different proportions*" (141). Her inexperienced writers were more concerned with mechanics and word choice while her experienced writers were more concerned with conveying meaning to a reader.

In a different study, Faigley and Witte (1981) compare the rewriting changes of inexperienced students, advanced students, and expert adult writers. These researchers classify revisions based upon the effect that the changes have upon the meaning of the text: those not altering the meaning of the text are *surface changes*; those affecting meaning of the text are *text-based changes* (407). Faigley and Witte have found that inexperienced students made more surface changes than experienced adults writers and that inexperienced students rarely made text-based changes that altered the summation of the text (what Faigley and Witte call *macrostructure* changes). Further, their advanced students made more changes in all types than either the inexperienced students or the expert adults. Like the inexperienced students, however, the advanced ones changed their discourse more often on surface levels than on text-based ones. But, like the expert adults, the advanced students made similar numbers of macrostructure changes (407).

Although Faigley and Witte note that text-based changes did not predominate for any of the three groups, the researchers observe that both the advanced students and the expert adults made more revisions of all types during the first drafts. These researchers, therefore, believe that both the advanced students and expert adults tend to view the first draft as tentative (407). They also suggest that both the advanced students and expert adults focus upon finding meaning and giving it shape, a process Murray (1978A:91) calls *internal revision*, in the early drafts. In later drafts these two groups also address the concerns of communicating their meaning to an outside audience (408), what Murray calls *external revision* (91). Similarly, both advanced students and experienced adults engage in Nold's revising for intentions.

The students of Sommers and Faigley and Witte suggest that inexperienced writers perceive rewriting differently from experienced ones. Inexperienced writers seem more concerned with getting their prose correct. Experienced writers are concerned with discovering and conveying meaning to others.

As composition teachers, we need to help our students see rewriting as more than finding and correcting errors before recopying prose. But we also need to insure that our students use written English correctly and accurately. Teaching rewriting, then, is not a matter of substituting one level of rewriting for another. Instead, we need to create learning situations where our students come to see early drafts as tentative rather than as final expressions of ideas. We need to teach our students to suspend their judgments of mechanical accuracy until they have found appropriate solutions, which convey meaning, to their rhetorical problems.

Strategies to Promote Rewriting

Our students tend to limit their conception of rewriting to editing and proofreading. To be fair to student textbooks and composition instruction, these skills are important. It is easier, however, to teach these skills because they involve the application of a fairly discrete set of principles. Getting our students to consider the meaning of their prose is more difficult, for the principles of internal or intentional revision require a complex interaction of a student with his own text. The strategies offered here are not *the answers* to the problem. Instead, they are some *suggested ones.*

Hodges (1982) describes ten topics of revision. These topics address the aspects of rewriting that Murray calls internal revision and that Nold calls intentional. They include asking students to take a piece of writing and make changes in point of view, structure (from inductive to deductive, for example), focus (selecting a small part of the original and expanding upon it), or tone (making a serious piece comic, for example). Hodges also has the writer alter the purpose, audience, mode of development, or genre. Finally, she suggests altering the "publisher" of a piece (for example, an article written for *Atlantic* would be rewritten for *People*) (39-40).

The discussion of writing in an individual conference, in a peer group, or among a whole class also seems to help students to rewrite. Thompson and Swope (1984) suggest self-evaluation questions to help students prepare for prewriting and rewriting conferences. Both sets of questions help the students to address aspects of both internal revision and revising for intentions.

Three additional research studies point to the effectiveness of peer-group interaction as a means to promote rewriting. In an experimental study, Hansen (1977) compared the effects of class discussions of possible rewriting changes with classes where students were allowed to make corrections on only their previously graded essays. Although both groups made similar improvement in the quality of their writing during the study, Hansen found that the discussion of problems was as effective in improving the quality of students' writing as completing a rewrite once papers had been graded. From a content analysis of comments that students made in a nine-week writing workshop for college sophomores, Danis (1980) found that 90 percent of the suggestions were accurate and that 60 percent of the suggestions, if followed, would result in improving the students' papers. In addition, the comments on 75 percent of the papers either recognized major weaknesses or recognized that only minor revision was necessary (5009A).

In another study of peer group effectiveness, Clifford (1981) compared a process-oriented writing class where students worked collaboratively in groups to a teacher-centered, product-oriented writing class. Although he found that neither approach was more successful in eliminating errors, he did find that the class using the collaborative approach improved in overall writing performance (45).

Enhancing Students' Commitment to Writing

Although the strategies that I have mentioned may help students to rewrite more extensively, the writer's commitment to the discourse seems to be a major influence upon the writer's willingness to rewrite at all. Student writers often race through a writing assignment once they have found a solution to the rhetorical problem that the assignment presents. Their haste reflects an attitude that nearly any solution will do. In some instances, students may turn in a paper that they did for another class or teacher, so they will not have to experience the pain of writing another one.

In contrast, experienced writers are committed to their writing. Their purpose for writing is to discover, develop, and communicate meaning to an audience outside themselves. As they work through their composing processes, often writing several drafts, they discover what it is that they have to say and refine it, changing the discourse in whatever ways seem necessary and reasonable.

For writers to make the types of rewriting changes involved in internal or intentional revision requires commitment to finding and making meaning within their prose. As teachers, we might enhance our students' commitment to their prose in two ways. We need to make writing less threatening, especially in terms of grammar and mechanics. When students are terrified of making errors and being graded down for them, they take a safe, easy path to completing the assignment. They will look for universal formulas and will rely upon their previous successes in terms of structure, modes of development, and word choice. Instead, we need to promote exploration in writing, suspending judgment of mechanical accuracy until students have discovered what it is that they have to say. Once they have resolved the rhetorical issues, they can then address any mechanical problems.

Another means to promote commitment to the writing is to craft our writing assignments carefully. If students can select their own topics and receive sufficient guidance from us in translating each choice into an appropriate focus, they may be more committed to the writing. Similarly, we should try out our own assignments to see if we can complete them and to help us predict problems students may encounter with the assignment. A student cannot be committed to a writing assignment he feels is impossible to complete. Providing students with several ways to fulfill an assignment enhances their commitment to it.

To teach our students to rewrite successfully requires our patience in working with them. Because of their inexperience as writers, our students will make mistakes and false starts until they develop a repertoire of reliable rewriting strategies.

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Committee on Classroom Practices in Teaching English invites educators at all levels—elementary, secondary, and college—to submit manuscripts for the 1986 Classroom Practices publication which will focus on the theme, "Teaching Thinking—Really!" Articles should describe successful classroom practices that activate students' thinking—creative, logical, or critical. The intent of the book is to present strategies which emphasize students' active involvement in their own learning. Articles should, therefore, focus on what students do in the classroom. Manuscripts may include such topics as students' self-selection of reading materials and topics for writing; real-life problem-solving; and classroom activities that develop students' thinking skills.

Manuscripts can range in length from two to ten pages. Two copies should be submitted, with the author's name and address appearing only on a title page attached to the front of each copy. Manuscripts should be mailed before September 1, 1985 to the Committee Chair:

Jeff Golub
4550 W. Sheridan
Seattle, WA 98199.

Group Conferencing: An Answer for Large Composition Classes

Grace Toney Edwards

For some years I have been committed to the concept of conferencing to teach and evaluate composition. But over the past two academic terms, student loads have increased dramatically for English faculty at my school. In early 1983 I might have handled over 600 papers from my composition students over the course of the quarter; but in 1984, keeping the same number of assignments, I handled 1260 papers during the term. In 1983 if I conferred with each student at least once on each new assignment for a minimum of ten minutes (an unlikely limitation), I averaged about 33 hours in conference during the ten-week quarter. But in 1984 to meet that same minimum standard, I had to spend 70 hours a quarter in conference. I quickly discovered that finding seven extra hours a week for minimal conferencing was practically impossible. Something had to change.

My options were clear: I could go back to the old way of taking up themes and grading them in isolation, or I could devise a new plan for conferences. I opted for the second path. There must be a way, I reasoned, to keep the tutorial approach, the individualized focus, and yet see more than one person at a time. And thus was born the concept of group conferencing.

In truth, necessity is the mother of invention. Peer groups have been part of my teaching strategy for a long time, but only under duress did I link peer groups and conferencing to teach composition. Under my new plan I formed editorial support groups in each class just as I had before. Each four-person group's role was to buoy the members in their writing efforts, to generate ideas, to serve as audience, to critique and edit drafts as they passed through various stages. None of this was new; I had used these strategies before. The added factor, however, was that the group now would come to me in conference as a unit. Yes, I still had four papers and four people to deal with in each conference, but I convinced myself that there were advantages to the plan.

Before I discuss those advantages, I need to explain how the complete teaching and writing process is organized in my classes. Building cohesion in the group requires collaboration from the beginning of each assignment. The students select their topics by completing various prewriting techniques in class, the most popular being looping and cubing as devised by Elizabeth

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and Greg Cowan in Writing. Sometimes the small groups brainstorm or discuss their ideas for topics before they begin to write. Whatever the specific procedure, they gain their initial impetus for the writing in the classroom. A draft is the next step. That draft comes into the small group for review on a specified date. This may be a first full draft, and most often is; however, the conscientious student will have worked through a couple of versions before he brings a manuscript to his peers. The copy must be readable and submitted in quadruplicate for all members of the group to have common access to the piece. During the class period each student's draft is critiqued by his group. To offer optimal help in the review, the student critics/editors sometimes need direction from the teacher. I generally prepare three or four questions for them to answer in writing so that they can hand the student authors a tangible piece of criticism along with the oral discussions of their work. The authors are admonished to "take the grain and let the chaff lie," for surely every suggestion will not work for every writer. They are then sent away to revise and rewrite.

Two points require elaboration here: the teacher's role and time limitations. As teacher, I do not intervene in the peer group critiquing process unless invited. I want the first reactions and suggestions to come from the group members. However, if a question arises and the students seek my help, I am of course available and willing to respond. The second point, time limitation, is one that must be solved according to each teacher's schedule. I have found a seventy-five minute period to be ideal for the critiquing process, for that gives a few minutes at the beginning for instruction and then allows at least a fifteen-minute block for each paper. Usually the student editors can suggest two or three sound improvements in that length of time. However, I am not always fortunate enough to have a seventy-five minute period, and I am well aware that many teachers never do. Indeed, last term I found myself teaching two sections of freshman composition on a Tuesday-Thursday schedule and one section on Monday-Wednesday-Friday. At first I tried to cram the critiquing process into the fifty-minute period, but I quickly learned that somebody in the group got short shrift. Consequently, I now devote two fifty-minute periods to the peer editing process. All group members are required to have their drafts ready by the first period, when two papers are selected at random for review. The other two papers are reviewed the next period. Sometimes the students finish their critiques a few minutes before the period ends. They are then urged to begin the revision immediately while they are still in an environment for writing. As they rewrite, they can seek clarification or additional reaction from their peer audience, or if they wish to submit a piece for teacher response at this point, they may exercise that option.

After the collaborative efforts, the students go off to face their drafts once again as solitary writers. This time as they revise, they know that the next audience will include the teacher as well as the group members. At assigned times during the following week the foursomes meet with me. During the group conference I retain the basic pattern of my individual conferences in years past. Each author must be prepared to read his revised draft aloud to me—and now to his group members also. He must furnish a photocopy of the essay so that I can see his written text. Each writer is the sole center of attention for about seven or eight minutes. As I hear and see the piece for the first time, the groupmates are hearing it for the first time also, even though they have previously worked on the original version. They are invited to comment on the changes and to suggest additional improvements. I react spontaneously at first and then attempt a quick critical analysis, touching on a couple of basic items such as clarity of expression, development of specifics, organization of ideas, sentence construction, or mechanical correctness.

The author learns in this short session how his instructor feels about the piece. He may also learn whether his editing group gave him a) good advice, b) bad advice, or c) no advice worth having. The instructor learns all of the above right along with the writer. Indeed, she learns a great deal about four students in her class and their interactions with one another; she learns what right and wrong perceptions they have about writing; and most gratifying of all, she learns how much more helpful an audience of four can be than an audience of one. The students spot gaps that she never would have noticed simply because she is used to filling in mental holes after years of stumbling through them. Under the old system, the student wrote almost entirely for the teacher, despite admonitions to the contrary. And the burden of criticism rested entirely on her. Not so anymore. Now the writer faces a panel of his peers first, then his teacher, but still in their company. At this stage the peers truly become a support group. Even though there may have been confrontations the previous week in the editing session and the peer critics may have assumed an adversarial role, this week they band together as they sit before the "higher tribunal." Their comments are almost always complimentary of the changes they note in the revisions, and they are genuinely pleased when an author acts on specific suggestions of the editors and produces a markedly improved draft. The oral rendering of the essay often sparks a new enthusiasm among the group as the voice of the writer enunciates and punctuates his points with increased clarity and effectiveness.

There is one other step after the group conference that needs to be carried to its proper conclusion here. The writers leave the conference with the charge to rewrite once again, incorporating new suggestions as they see fit. The resultant version is the one I receive for grading. I also ask for all the working papers so that I can evaluate the process. Because I have seen and heard the papers in conference, they are familiar to me and, therefore, can be evaluated fairly quickly. I attempt to respond particularly to the revisions arising from the conference. Occasionally I may invite selected students for follow-up individual conferences after their essays are returned. And any student may request an individual conference at this or another stage of the process. As a general rule though, the group conference serves as the dominant teacher-student communication for each writing assignment.

The advantages of group conferencing are many, but they are not without their negative counterparts. The biggest frustration for both the students and teacher is time restriction. I allot thirty minutes per group, and sometimes that is enough; but more often it is not. I may find myself rushing on the last paper of the foursome, or perhaps asking the author to stay over after class for a fuller review. Or I may draw out the allotted time of the first group while a second group waits in the hall. The simplest solution to this problem appears to be an expansion of the time allotment for each group, but that answer is not so simple to implement. Since I use class time for the group conferences, I can scarcely afford to take more than a week for conferencing on each new assignment. Already I consume a full week's worth of class time, plus ten or fifteen minutes squeezed in on both ends of each period. I have considered meeting some of the groups outside of class time, but difficulties mount when trying to mesh five different schedules, particularly when that procedure must be multiplied to accommodate several groups.

For the moment, then, I am struggling to refine my system to operate more efficiently and expeditiously within the time limits. Unlike Roger Garrison, who describes a quick process for a conference in *One-to-One*, I cannot give a minute or so to a paper and discover its most significant worth or its most betraying fault. I require more time and intense concentration, both of which are at a premium in the group conference.

Because my concentration on the individual papers decreases in the group setting, I sometimes miss a significant critical point that requires comment and perhaps revision. When I see the paper later in its final form, I suffer guilt over the wrong that I failed to right in the conference. And yet as I analyze my past methods of evaluating, I quickly become aware of the same sins of omission in both individual conferences and isolated theme reading. "To err is human," Pope said, and I guess he meant that maxim to apply even to English teachers.

Despite the flaws in the system, I like the group conference and I intend to keep it. My students do too. One may remark, "Whenever I meet with my group and the teacher, I always find out something helpful about my writing, whether I want or not." Another may say, "You should keep both the editing groups and the group conferences in freshman composition. We have a lot of fun in the editing groups, and we learn things about our writing in the conferences." Perhaps the priorities are not always just right from the teacher's perspective, but they fall into place according to the values each student brings to his work. And testimonies are given over and over about the worth of the group conference. One fledgling author spoke for many when she said, "I am always a little scared to show my writing to other people, even my friends, but in the group conference we all have to read our papers out loud. It really helps me to hear what the teacher thinks about the papers of my group members. Sometimes that's better than hearing about my own because it gives me confidence."

The evidence is in, subjective and slanted though it may be. Group conferencing works for me. Barring a magical fifty percent reduction in class size, I expect to make it a permanent part of my repertoire. Even with such a miracle, the group dynamic is too good to give up.

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Teachers Tell What They Do To Involve Students With Literature

Recent stress on the "basics" and on writing has sometimes crowded literature out of its central place in the English curriculum. But a new volume in the Classroom Practices Series from NCTE demonstrates that, in the hands of imaginative teachers of English at all levels of education, the teaching of literature remains alive and well. In *Literature—News That Stays News: Fresh Approaches to the Classics*, 29 teachers discuss literature units that have captured their students' imaginations and prompted thoughtful discussion of the human concerns raised by the authors of significant works.

Planned by the Classroom Practices Committee, *Literature—News That Stays* News spans the centuries from Aristotle to modern novelists, via such diverse writers as Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens, and Harper Lee. The teachers' animated discussions show how carefully planned lines of questioning can help students to connect centuries-old works with their own lives. Contributors show how adroit pairing of a more difficult work with a more accessible one on a similar theme can open students' minds to its challenge. One teacher approaches Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* through the less difficult William Golding's *Lord of the Flies.*

Editor Candy Carter notes that as a result of renewed interest in writing, new approaches that improve the teaching of literature have emerged. One group of short essays offers fresh ideas for writing assignments that take students below the surface of great works. In additional groups of essays, teachers talk about their successful methods for teaching specific titles: in grades K-8, in high school, and in college.

Literature—News that Stays News: Fresh Approaches to the Classics, edited by Candy Carter. 120 pages, paperbound. price: $8.50; NCTE members, $6.65. Available from NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. Stock No. 30127.

Making Writing Conferences Work

Edgar H. Thompson

As desirable as it might be, few public school English teachers have time to have fifteen or twenty minute writing conferences with each of their students on a regular basis. Still, if you're like me, you want more one-on-one time with your students. I'm convinced that in conferences with students I can best explain concepts about writing that we've discussed in class and reinforce independent discoveries that students are making as they struggle to put words down on paper.

Having the desire for frequent writing conferences and not having the time presents a very real dilemma. I think this dilemma can be partially solved, but before I discuss what might be done, I want first to describe what factors seem to be necessary to make writing conferences work.

Essential Factors for Effective Writing Conferences

Research about writing conferences is mixed. Most of the evidence is descriptive in nature with individual teachers giving testimonials about what should be happening in writing conferences. Research studies do exist, but some of them are seriously flawed while others, mostly qualitative or ethnographic, are not generalizable. Still, experts do seem to agree that five factors must exist for writing conferences to be effective.

Student-Centered. First, writing conferences should be student-centered. The meaning of the term "student-centered," however, depends upon who defines it. Lindsay (1966) means that students should be led by teachers to develop their own criteria for judging the effectiveness of their writing. Murray (1968) contends that conferences should be initiated only by students and should deal with the major problems in the students' writing. As a result of conference-centered teaching, Fisher and Murray (1973) assert that students should also have control over the subjects for their writing, in addition to charting the direction of the conference. Generally supporting Fisher and Murray, Graves (1976) believes that students should talk about their writing in conferences, free from the distraction of teachers constantly pointing out student errors. Nixon (1977) builds on Graves ideas, portraying teachers as guides with students determining the direction in their own writing and thus developing their full potential as writers. Finally, Carnicelli (1980) maintains that conferences need to be student-centered because such conferences provide students with the opportunity for self-learning and control, the right to accept or reject suggestions by teachers.

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The underlying current that runs through each of these descriptions of what student-centered means is that students should have some control over what happens in conferences. Most of these descriptions do not deny the important feedback that can be given by the teacher. They do, however, suggest that students should be taking an active role in conferences, suggesting topics for discussion in addition to those identified by teachers. What all of these experts seem to have in mind is a partnership, both parties participating equally, neither party dominating—especially the teacher.

Intervention at Different Points. Second, several experts believe that conferences can be effective only when several are held and, furthermore, held at different points in the writing process. When these experts say "writing process," they usually employ the common linear description of this process—prewriting, writing, and revision—though the exact terminology may differ from one person to the next. Bissex (1982), Graves (1976), and Duke (1975) agree that interventions should be made in student writing at several points as the writing progresses. Murray (1968; 1979) describes several conferences that he has had with students as their writing developed from stage to stage. He says that he is more active in earlier (prewriting) conferences and tends to relax more, letting the students do more of the work, in conferences taking place later in the evolution of a piece of writing. Carnicelli (1980) concurs; however, he adds that conferences that take place after a composition has been graded are generally a waste of time. Students are not committed to what transpires in such conferences because they usually are unable (in terms of grade) to do anything else to improve their paper. Garrison (1981) asserts that interventions should be made as students wrestle with those elements that are most important to a piece of writing (idea or subject, content, point of view, audience, organization, and sentences and individual grammatical problems).

Aviva Freedman (1982) also agrees with the others, though she describes the writing process as having seven steps instead of the usual three. The general consensus seems to be that interventions in student writing need to be made as often as is possible and at any point in the process students use to create a paper, with the possible exception of so-called post-mortems after grading.

Clarification of Student Expectations. Third, Graves (1982), Bissex (1982), and Duke (1975) contend that students should have a clear idea of what to expect in conferences if they are to reach their maximum effectiveness. Simply, they believe that students should not be "put on the spot" by teachers who expect them to assume roles that they did not anticipate. The inverse of this situation also holds true. To prevent such misunderstandings, Murray (1982) suggests that teachers make sure that both they and their students understand the ground rules of what is going to happen in conferences before they ever begin to discuss the writing.

Modeling Appropriate Solutions. Fourth, Bissex (1982), Graves (1982), Murray (1982), and Carnicelli (1980) believe that it is important that teachers model appropriate behaviors in conferences for students. Such modeling can, in time, acclimate students to what kind of behaviors are appropriate in conferences. More importantly, however, modeling allows teachers to demonstrate possible solutions to problems students are having with their writing. Students expect such modeling, and rightly so. As Carnicelli (1980) points out, students he surveyed perceive teachers to be ineffective when they are totally non-directive in conferences, never pointing out potential problems or demonstrating possible solutions to these problems.

Modeling, however, does not need to be didactic. It can take the form of skillful questions which guide students to solutions to their own problems (Graves, 1982). Bissex (1982:76) says that several teachers have found the following general questions to be helpful:

1. What would you like me/us to listen for and react to? (Ask this before the writer reads aloud his piece.)
2. What part do you like the best?
3. What part gave you the most trouble?
4. What did you consider putting in and then decide against?
5. What would you like to change in your next draft?
6. What did you learn from writing this piece?

Murray (1982) probably summarizes the intent of most experts. He says that teachers should model an ideal self as a writer, showing students how they should be reacting to what they have written. Students can then emulate this model and make it a part of their own behavior as they engage in conferences with teachers.

Priority Given to Larger Content Issues. The last point of consensus about a potentially ideal conference regards content. Though Garrison (1981) specifies a rather rigid hierarchy to the content transacted in writing conferences, Freedman (1982), Carnicelli (1980) and Garrison (1981) seem to agree with Murray's (1968) basic approach to revision in the way they structure the content of their conferences. These theorists think that the larger rhetorical issues of shape, form, and audience should be focused on first. Sentence level or grammatical concerns should be dealt with in later conferences. For example, most experts believe that a first conference on a student paper that deals only with subject and verb agreement and punctuation would not be either appropriate or effective. If the larger issues, such as the overall shape of the piece of writing, are addressed in previous conferences, then a conference dealing with only surface problems might be justified.

A Writing Week

Knowing what factors are necessary for effective conferences is one thing. Finding time to have such conferences where these factors can be addressed is another. Other than occasionally having extended conferences of fifteen or twenty minutes with students, I think the only way public school teachers can have frequent, effective conferences with their students is if they follow the hierarchy suggested by Garrison (1981) and follow his practice of having numerous brief conferences with students. It seems to me that the best way to create time for these short conferences is to organize classes into writing workshops where teachers can work with students either individually or in small groups. A Writing Week of the kind proposed by Moore (1978) allows for this kind of interaction.

Moore (1978) organizes his classes on a five-day schedule that continues from week to week. I do not think it is necessary to dedicate all English classes solely to writing and nothing else. A Writing Week could be held once every other week, once a month, or once every grading period. No matter what the frequency a Writing Week can provide time for one-on-one interaction with students regarding their writing.

A typical Writing Week schedule, as Moore (1978) envisions it, might consist of the following:

Day 1

Students brainstorm for ten minutes to generate writing topics. After this brainstorming, students and the teacher write. After the teacher has written for a while (Moore suggests five minutes), the teacher should move to a seat at the back of the room. Students are told to discuss with the teacher any problems they are having working with the writing topic they have chosen. Two vacant seats are also provided at the back of the room for individual students to have conferences with one another. (Teachers interested in training their students to conduct writing conferences will find Reigstad and McAndrew's *Training Tutors for Writing Conferences*, NCTE, 1984, helpful.) Making these seats available removes the distraction that talk in conferences might have on other students as they write. For homework, students continue working on their first draft (Moore, 1978:39-40).

Day 2

Students continue to work on their first drafts Again, the teacher also writes at least for the first few minutes of the period. Teachers should again make themselves available for conferences in the back of the room. Two seats are again provided for student-to-student conferences. Students are encouraged to read their drafts to one another in addition to the teacher. Though Moore does not suggest the following idea at this point, there is no reason why the teacher cannot circulate around the room, having brief conferences of thirty seconds to two minutes with each student, providing encouragement, answering questions, and giving feedback. Students do revisions of their first drafts for homework and bring the revisions to class the next day (Moore, 1978:40).

Day 3

Students and the teacher sit in a circle, and all members of the class, including the teacher, pass their second drafts around the circle to be read silently. In Moore's classes, some papers are read completely while others receive limited attention, depending on time. During these readings, Moore and his students may "either rewrite introductory sentences, write new titles, rewrite last paragraphs, or underline words they like" (Moore, 1978:40).

For homework, students swap papers and write an evaluation of their teammate's paper. According to Moore (1978), the

> first part of the evaluation is a brief paragraph in which the evaluators respond as readers, not as a substitute English teacher, and write what they thought the point of the essay was, what the essay may have reminded them of, or what they found most interesting. (p. 40)

The second part of the evaluation consists of students identifying several things they like about the draft and then writing at least two specific suggestions for improvement.

Day 4

Students share their evaluations with one another. As they do, the teacher circulates around the room working with each pair, dealing with issues and problems that students see in their writing and refocusing their efforts if necessary. The teacher also collects a few papers to be duplicated and shared with the class during Day 5. For homework, students revise their second drafts in light of both peer and teacher feedback (Moore, 1978:41).

Day 5

In a circle again, the class discusses some of the essays that the teacher selected on Day 4. Teachers should start with their own drafts so that they model their own strengths, their willingness to share, and their vulnerability as writers. Teachers can also model ways to respond honestly to a piece without destroying the writer. Moore says that in his classes, he makes sure that he and his students avoid two things: "phony praise, and making the writer feel as if he or she is on trial" (Moore, 1978:41). This is good advice to follow.

Conclusion

Granted, the brief conferences I am advocating do not allow for the kind of extended conversation we might like to have with our students about their writing. This fact does not mean, however, that brief conferences are ineffective. They can be especially helpful to students if, as teachers, we allow the students to bring up topics for discussion, help them clarify what they are trying to say about their writing, and help them explore ways they might rectify problems they identify. We need to avoid telling students what to do. When we do this, we reaffirm the role of teachers as having the answer when, in fact, there may be multiple answers, many of which teachers may not know. After all, in conferences, whose writing are we talking about anyway? The answer, of course, is the students'. Since students own the writing, I think it is better to spend time helping them to improve what they have already started, instead of barging in, usurping their ownership, and making the writing our property, not the students'. We will not always be there to tell students what to do. Our job should be to teach students how to function on their own as writers. If we listen and let students do most of the talking in conferences, we can help them become autonomous learners and writers, which is what I hope most of us want our students to become.

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Teaching the Research Paper the Right Way

Donald Kenney

One of the functions of a school library is to extend the curriculum beyond the classroom—beyond the four walls and thirty-five desks, beyond the teacher and fellow students, and, more importantly, beyond the textbook. The library makes it possible for students to explore and explicate further the information and facts taught within the confines of the single classroom unit. The library makes it possible for students to consult a wider variety of materials—materials that offer different points of view and that may include not only books and periodicals but also films, filmstrips, and sound recordings.

One of the numerous ways students are asked to extend their knowledge on a particular subject or topic is to write a research paper. This assignment may occur in several fashions. In most cases, the students are simply sent to the library without any preliminary understanding of what they really are supposed to find out and what the end product should be. In these circumstances, the librarian has usually not played any role in formulating the assignments and has typically not been informed at all of such projects. Nevertheless, these students arrive in the library, and, perhaps at best, consult a general encyclopedia and the card catalog before leaving. On the other hand, there are those extraordinary cases where the teacher asks the librarian to provide some instruction to a class that is launching into a research project. Then the librarian will do a one-hour stand, attempting to pack everything into this one chance to teach students the basic skills in retrieving information and interpreting bibliographic citations.

No wonder students are so quickly turned off the moment the phrase "research paper" is mentioned. No wonder so many students actually believe they have done a "research paper" because that paper is twenty pages long and produced from numerous note cards and bibliographic notations and a twice revised draft outline. Upon graduation from high school, "voluminous mentality" is typically what so many high school students think writing the research paper is about. Yet, students should depart from high school with a better understanding of both researching and writing this type of paper. They should know the fundamentals of focusing on a topic, gathering information, and writing up the findings. Part of the

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problem is determining what students should be taught about the research process, especially as it relates to retrieving information for their own use and pleasure. Too often, writing the research paper is viewed as only requiring an outline, some note and bibliography cards, perhaps a first draft, and then a 10-15 page paper that is perfectly typed. As Murray points out,

> Unfortunately, when it comes to the research paper, too many teachers are enthralled with their own training. For most students, the research paper on a literary figure, period, or genre is at best an exercise in irrelevance. Going to a number of different critics, patching comments together with a few passages of nebulous transition, and decorating the result with a bibliography and footnotes is neither original writing nor research. (447)

The completion of such an assignment rarely constitutes an integrated educational experience in which the students become truly involved. This is not research nor will it teach students the necessary skills both to cope with and to write the research paper that may be demanded of them in college. It is important, then, to understand the nature of research and to teach it as a process.

The Research Process

"Process" is defined by Webster's dictionary as "a series of actions or operations conducing to an end." The research paper should be taught as a process in order to instill in students both the abilities to find the information related to a research problem and to write up the findings in a meaningful way. It is through some organized procedure that students should be taught the process of approaching the writing of research papers. By presenting the writing of the research paper in an organized fashion, teachers can help students to learn the basic bibliographic skills needed to approach all types of research. The research process consists of five basic steps—finding information, evaluating the information, summarizing the information, drawing conclusions about the information, and writing up the findings. There are, of course, numerous pedagogical approaches to these steps. However, at the same time, there are many pitfalls to avoid when teaching these steps.

Finding the Information

Too often, much more time is spent on what is sometimes called "bibliographic access" than is necessary. If students are at all prepared to find information, that preparation will have included the use and interpretation of the card catalog and indexes. Although such skills are important elements of the preliminary research stage, students first need to understand how to determine the researchability of a topic. An exploratory stage related to the topic should initiate the research process. Students should look not only at how much or how little information is available but at the scope and breadth of a topic. A student interested in doing a paper on "lasers" should quickly realize that this subject is much too broad and that the focus will need to be on some aspect of lasers, such as the medical uses or the military uses of lasers. This early exploratory stage is essential to teach students not only to find information on a particular topic but also to see components of a topic. A student who is researching a topic such as "the role of exercise in slowing the rate of aging" will need to be aware of the various approaches to researching "double topics." This early stage of research might include the preparation of a required preliminary bibliography, but this prerequisite should not be allowed to hamper the student's freedom in exploring the information on the subject.

It is at this initial level that students may, and indeed probably should, experience a certain level of frustration when they have difficulty locating the information they need. Students need help in how to deal with the disappointment of not finding the information. With such help, however, experiencing some negative responses in their research efforts will make students more resourceful in finding alternative sources as well as becoming more experienced in the research process. One method of teaching students the skills needed in this exploratory stage is to assign a broad area such as the "environment" and have the students develop a research problem related to this area. Broad topics that may not be researchable, either because of limited library resources or lack of relevant research, should be included in such assignments so that students can discover that one outcome of the exploratory stage is rejection of a topic.

Evaluating the Information

A great deal of lip service is paid to evaluating sources of information but seldom is this step given adequate attention. The biases of the written word in both books and journals are simply not understood by students. Both librarians and instructors seem to realize the importance of evaluating information but rarely bother to teach the techniques of how to do it. Perhaps this omission is a result of the fact that evaluation is not an easy aspect of the research process to teach and, if taught at all, it is taught after the students are too far along in their research to make a great deal of difference to them. Techniques for evaluating information and sources should precede any instruction on the mechanics of writing and accessing information. Students need this capability during the exploratory stages and when they are attempting to find information.

Instruction on evaluating sources should include several key elements. First, the concept of authorship should be firmly implanted. The importance of signed encyclopedia articles and journal articles should be stressed. It is at this point that librarians and instructors can teach students to be selective when researching for information in general encyclopedias and periodical indexes. Knowing the value of the source of information and being able to attribute data to a specific source are critical for beginning researchers to know and value. Once students fully grasp the concept of authorship, the limitations of such tools as *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* should fall into place, and students are likely to turn to more in-depth, discipline-related indexes where authorship gives more credibility to the research being pursued.

Second, most students seem to believe in the infallibility of the printed word. Skills in critical questioning need to be heightened so that students will question and debate points of view represented in print. For example, students can be taught that the authority of writers can be cross-examined by checking on the authors' credentials as well as the credentials of publishing houses. Students need to know that certain publishing houses are noted for publishing authoritative works whereas the reliability of others may be questionable or they may produce publications primarily for mass appeal and, therefore, be more concerned with sales than with accuracy. Discussion of these matters will raise students' consciousness concerning the publishing world and the reliability of what might be written by an author and printed by a publisher.

Third, students need to perceive the biases of certain reference tools. For example, *Readers' Guide*, by the very fact that it indexes many popular journals, particularly news journals that represent a contemporary viewpoint, is an impartial tool. On the other hand, subject bibliographies on many popular topics such as women's studies and various minority groups should be used cautiously simply because compilers are not always selective in choosing the items to be listed and in many cases cannot be discriminatory because of the lack of materials on a topic.

Summarizing the Information

Much more attention is given to summarizing information than perhaps is necessary. Students are routinely instructed on how to take notes and to prepare note cards and bibliography cards. Actually, students need to develop their own methods and techniques of summarizing and notetaking. They do, however, need to be aware that a methodical system is necessary if they are to keep up with sources consulted, exact citations, and specific facts in order to produce the final paper. Methods of notetaking and bibliographic housekeeping are best left up to the preferences of individual students. Instructors and librarians need to emphasize that summarizing has to be done in some methodical fashion but give more attention to other facets of the research process.

Drawing Conclusions from the Information

The purpose of research is, of course, not only to pull together diverse facts and viewpoints on a topic but also to draw conclusions and develop new insights into a subject. If students are instructed properly on the research process and, in particular, on evaluating and questioning sources, there is a greater likelihood that students will draw appropriate conclusions concerning the subject of the research. However, the tendency on the part of many instructors is to spend too much time teaching the mechanics of researching. Consequently, students end up pasting and patching notes and relying solely on the viewpoint of one or two critics or several key sources to prepare the final research paper. If the research paper is expected to heighten students' critical thinking and writing abilities, instructors must be willing to devote more time to strategies that will sharpen these abilities.

Writing Up the Findings

The purpose of any research is, of course, to discover something new. If the intent of writing a research paper is to lead students through the methodical process of doing research and then presenting the results in meaningful papers, they must be encouraged and taught to reach original conclusions on their topics. However, students cannot reach original conclusions if they have not done an adequate job of research. The instructor will simply have nothing to work with in evaluating the student's work and be able to make few suggestions to the student about how to improve the written paper. If students do not have the skills to do research and make judgments about their findings, they are not likely to produce a quality research paper. Doing the research and presenting the results in writing are so intertwined that it is not possible to separate the two.

Summary

The purpose of requiring students to write a research paper, particularly in senior high school and freshman English courses, is to teach them to organize their findings in a substantially written paper as well as to teach them how to do research. The two purposes are highly interlinked. If students are to understand the value and nature of research and how to access information, instruction is essential. Students cannot acquire these skills on their own. The sophistication of informational sources made possible by improved computer technology and the increasing number of reference tools make it impossible for students to learn bibliographic access on their own. However, linking the teaching of research skills and the writing of a research paper as a total, inseparable process can help to instill in students the skills they will need to approach this type of assignment throughout their lives.

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Poetry in the Elementary School

Marlow Ediger

Most teachers agree that pupils should develop a thorough appreciation for poetry. Because many words are generally used in unique ways in poetry, a study of poetry should aid pupils in vocabulary development. It is important that pupils encounter creative ideas and thoughts when reading poetry so that they can develop their own creative ideas when writing poetry.

Trauger writes the following pertaining to objectives in the poetry curriculum:

> Maintaining children's native responsiveness and maturing their poetic understanding to keep it abreast of their chronological age are worthy long-range objectives in teaching poetry. Between the two, the balance is delicate; there is danger of strangling the former through fumbling efforts at the latter. (1963:331-332)

Poetry may also be taught as a separate unit of study. An ultimate goal of such study for pupils is to enjoy reading and writing poetry. Poetry, therefore, should not be analyzed when it destroys pupil interest in learning. Poetry may also be correlated with different curriculum areas in the elementary school. The teacher may have pupils study and write poetry as it relates to science, social studies, mathematics, health, as well as in language arts.

Such an approach will result in pupils' perceiving that subject matter from diverse academic disciplines is related. For example, if first graders are studying a unit on the city, they might dictate content to the teacher who writes the resulting poem. Others may be able to write their own. Discussions, pictures, filmstrips, and/or slides can provide information for writing poetry. An interesting kind of poem for pupils to write is a couplet. Couplets consist of two lines of verse somewhat uniform in length with ending words rhyming, such as:

The sidewalk is broad and wide
The boy rides a bicycle on the side.

In a science unit on magnetism and electricity, students might generate couplets like the following:

We made some magnets in the room
Then we cleaned the room with a broom.

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Students individually individually or cooperatively may also write triplets, three uniform lines with ending words rhyming. The following is an example of a triplet as it relates to and integrates with a specific social studies unit entitled "Westward Movement."

The forty niners went to the West
To look for gold with great zest
Hoping to gain much wealth at best.

There are definite advantages in having pupils write free verse. Learners are not restricted by rhyming words and uniformity of line length. The writing of free verse can be related to many units of study in diverse curriculum areas. For example, if pupils are studying a science unit on prehistoric life, the following free verse could be written by a child individually or in a small group:

The Tyrannosaurus Rex dinosaur
ate many other kinds of dinosaurs.
had serrated teeth.
was the king of dinosaurs.
was ferocious.
was taller than other dinosaurs.
lived during the Mesozoic era.
might have been cold-blooded like fish and turtles are today.

Limericks are an enjoyable type of poetry for pupils to read and write. Limericks consist of a couplet and a triplet. The first, second, and fifth lines in a limerick made a triplet. The third and fourth lines comprise a couplet. Generally, it is important for pupils to understand and attach meaning to a couplet and triplet before limericks are introduced. Consequently, the teacher should read limericks to children from an anthology of children's literature. These limericks must be chosen carefully to capture interests of listeners since enjoyment of poetry is very important. The selected limericks must be on the understanding level of children. When learners select the limericks they like best, the teacher writes them on the chalkboard or on a transparency. Pupils inductively need to arrive at meaningful generalizations pertaining to what ingredients are necessary in the writing of limericks. Then students write their own limericks once the inherent pattern is understood. The following limerick pertains to a unit on magnetism and electricity:

There once was a man called Thomas Edison
Who invented a bulb which gave a bright light in the long run
He liked to invent great things
From which America and the world benefits and sings
And made life easier, more enjoyable, and much more fun.

Haiku is also an enjoyable poetry form for pupils to write. Rhyming words are not necessary in haiku poetry, but students do need to be able to divide words into syllables when writing haiku. The first line of a haiku poem has five syllables. The second line has seven syllables, and the last line has five syllables. Haiku poetry often discusses nature. The following haiku poem creates a visual and auditory image of rain falling in the out of doors:

> The rain pattering
> on the window with great speed
> swish, slosh, swoosh, slash, spash.

Students need to be praised and encouraged to present novel ideas in writing poetry. They should be encouraged to invent new words. For example, the last line of the haiku poem above has unique words which give sounds made by drops of rain. Through writing poetry students learn onomatopoeia, a term given to words which make sounds similar to those in the natural environment. Alliteration is also prevalent in the last line of the haiku poem in that the beginning sound of each word is the same. By using the poetic device themselves, students can more easily recognize its use in other poetry.

Imagery in Poetry

It is important for pupils to understand imagery in the writing of poetry. They need to develop meaningful concepts and generalizations about metaphors and similes. This can be achieved by reading poetry containing metaphors and similes; discussing meanings of metaphors and similes; having pupils find and read poems that contain metaphors and similes; and having pupils individually or in groups write poetry which contains metaphors and similes.

Wolfe writes the following pertaining to students' developing sequential learnings in imagery:

> Children can make comparisons, too; once set in motion in an expectant classroom, their originality astonishes both them and us. Perhaps they have already described boys and girls in the class. One girl, like Jane, has golden hair; a boy, like Will, has blue eyes; still another pupil has brown eyes or black hair.
>
> We may put some comparisons on the board for completion, naming pupils our class has described:
>
> 1. Joe's eyes are as blue as ________ .
> 2. Fred's eyes are as brown as ________ .
> 3. Fran's dress is as green as ________ .
>
> From these we may go on to other comparisons to be completed:
>
> 4. The house was as dark as ________ .
> 5. His face was as red as ________ .
> 6. The wind made a noise like ________ .
> 7. Jimmy stood as still as ________ .

> In a later lesson we may begin with several comparisons like this:
>
> As soft as a kitten's paw
> As soft as a feather
> As soft as a pillow
>
> With teacher guidance students might then write lines of verse containing imagery such as in the following examples:
>
> 1. The rain sounded like fairies dancing on the window sill.
> 2. The train roared like a giant in the sky.
> 3. The wind blew like a sneezing ogre. (1972:405-406)

In each of these lines of poetry, similes are used. Something is compared to something else joined by the word "like." In sentence number one, for example, the sound of "rain" is compared to the sound of "fairies dancing on the window sill." In sentence number two, "The train roared" is compared to "a giant in the sky," while in sentence three, "The wind blew" is being contrasted with "a sneezing ogre." The word "as" is also used in imagery: "He came as a thief in the night." In the case of metaphors, the words "like" and "as" are not used in making creative comparisons. Notice the use of metaphors in the following lines of verse:

1. The cat, a swirling mass of colors, runs in the yard.
2. The clouds were fluffy pillows racing across the sky.
3. The house appeared to float on fairies' wings in the sky.

Otherwise, similes and metaphors have similar functions in making creative comparisons.

Creative Writing and the Pupil

Creative thinking is an important skill and attitude for all learners to develop in greater depth as they progress through the school years. In everyday living, it is important to think creatively so that one's own problems may be solved. Too frequently, solutions that have worked for others in the solving of problems may not work for us. Unique solutions in many cases are then needed to solve problems.

Donoghue describes creative behavior in the following paragraph:

> A creative person is one who relies less on the aspects of memory and cognition (which are most often measured by IQ tests) and so may sometimes be labelled as less intelligent and hence, in educational settings, an "over-achiever." He approaches learning situations in unstandardized ways and appears offbeat or inferior at times when he is thinking. He is not highly success-oriented. What he is, however, is curious, original, self-directing, sensitive, secure, flexible, persistent, humorous, and productive. He needs to meet challenge and to attempt difficult... tasks just as he needs to give himself completely to a task and to become fully absorbed in it. (1975:275)

Creative thinking takes place in a rich learning environment and in a psychological environment where students feel free to explore and to experiment. Stimulating bulletin boards, learning centers, reading materials, and audio-visual aids help in setting the stage for creative endeavors. Students will then acquire subject matter which they might use to write a creative story, poem, essay, letter, or other form of written work.

Too frequently, the teacher has assessed student progress in writing based on spelling words correctly, demonstrating neat handwriting, using punctuation marks properly, and using capital letters correctly. To be sure, these are important, but very little emphasis may have been placed upon ideas that students have expressed. Students can reveal their achievement in the mechanics of writing when they proofread their final written product. However, at the time ideas are written on paper, students should not be expected to concentrate on the mechanics of writing. Donoghue writes:

> Factors identified as the most inhibitive to creative expression include: (1) tests based on detailed memorization; (2) discouragement of fantasy and imagination; (3) stereotyped sex roles; and (4) social expectation, including peer censure. (1975:276)

The teacher must give careful consideration to praising students for being creative. Most students like praise for work that reveals improved performance. If creative products are praised by the teacher, students generally will feel that creativity is what is wanted and desired. If the teacher criticizes students' creative behavior, learners might feel that this is not an approved way of approaching learning activities.

There needs to be time set aside for students to share completed work. Students individually may perceive how content differs between and among finished products. When sharing thoughts, students learn from each other ways of expressing unique ideas as well as creativity contained in ideas in and of themselves. They may learn about new words which can be used in writing as well as creative ways in which these new words can be used. Students may also learn about inventing words to use in writing.

The teacher certainly needs to be well acquainted with characteristics of creative behavior. There are unfortunately teachers who have confused creative behavior of students with misbehavior. It is important to be well versed in approaches to (a) setting the stage for learners to exhibit creative behavior, (b) rewarding creative behavior of students, and (c) being highly knowledgeable about characteristics of individuals who are creative. Greene and Petty state:

> Poetry is (or should be) a vital part of the literature program, yet too often it is neglected or poorly taught in today's schools. Some teachers simply do not know how to present poetry to children; others feel it has little place in the modern science-oriented world; a few, unfortunately, spoil children's appreciation by poor reading or prolonged analysis of form and style. Yet children love rhythm, rhyme, and the sounds of words. (1975:271)

The teacher must set the stage to have children develop a desire to express ideas creatively. A variety of learning experiences can aid them in creative thinking and creative writing, but these experiences must be challenging and interesting.

> Although the presentation of poetry should be almost exclusively oral, visual aids cannot be omitted altogether. The teacher should be constantly on the watch for pictures which will make suitable illustrations of poems; these may be used when a poem is presented orally, or occasionally a bulletin board may be centered around a few lines or a short poem, either new or already known to the children. Once in a while, a bulletin board display may honor a poet whose work the children have particularly liked, but these should be few in number; attention should be centered primarily on the poems themselves.
>
> No teacher should feel any compulsion to teach particular poems because they are in the suggested course of study, because they are in the anthology available to the class, or because they are reputed to be classics. There are enough "good" poems to suit anyone's taste. (1975:276)

Greene and Petty suggest the following teaching methodologies in the writing of poetry: students should have ample opportunities to engage in writing a variety of poetic forms, such as couplets, triplets, free verse, limericks, and haiku. Children's ideas in creative writing need to be accepted and respected by the teacher as well as by each other.

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Journals Are Worth The Time

Alice Niles

Given all that we have to do, why should we add journals to other writing requirements for us and for our students? I believe that the journal is a powerful teaching-learning tool with broader educational implications than just writing improvement. Journals provide students with the opportunity for personal as well as language and cognitive development.

In journals, students share their thoughts, doubts, and feelings in their own style. They are motivated to write because the self is a meaningful topic to them during adolescence. The journal is a place where student "writing is the struggle by means of words to come to terms with all the forces operating within him on a given subject: emotions, instincts, memory, intelligence, judgment" (Pastva, 282). The journal provides a place in which the student can develop problem-solving ability; it is a place where students can explore their environment, their relationships, their expectations, and their uncertainties. While students may not actually solve their problems, the journal provides the opportunity to understand their world, a starting point for finding solutions. For instance, one of my students wrote about her severe problems with her parents. She had withdrawn from them as well as from her younger brother, all of whom she loved. During the term, she arrived at an understanding of what the problems really were; she began to close the gap and tighten the family unit again. Through articulating the problem in her journal, she found ways to work it out herself.

I am a writing teacher, not a psychologist, so in responding to journals, I like brief, marginal comments that are non-judgmental but jolt a student's thought process: "How does mothering fit in with your career goals?" may encourage practical analysis of potential role conflict and re-evaluation of reality for one student, while "this would make a good essay topic" might spur another student into creative and/or analytical thought processes. Gradually, students can begin to think logically about themselves and their world and to apply that logic not only to their own experience but also to the literature and social problems we ask them to analyze and critique. In exploring their own experience, they have the opportunity to improve communication in written language as well as to reflect upon and modify their notions about the world. Thus, the journal actively engages students in the thinking-learning process.

"Student talking to Teacher is the crux of the composition experience

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in the classroom" (Spurgeon, 19). The journal offers just such a talking/listening experience in which students grow personally because they take the time to reflect on both themselves and their world. The students communicate with me as I do with the students, providing the opportunity for language development. Many students, the majority really, will initially shy away from keeping journals because of the personal revelation involved, and justifiably so. Keeping a journal involves a risk that teachers must not violate: "Nowhere else is an individual so naked as in his writing. Nowhere is he so vulnerable" (Showler, 37).

Journal writing has a strong theory base in the work of Piaget, Bruner, Britton, and others. The development of mental structures, e.g., separating, ordering, classifying, comparing, and contrasting, is as individual and natural as physical maturation. In short, cognitive or intellectual maturation is a uniquely individual development (Phipps, 35). As adolescents, individuals achieve Piaget's "consideration of possibles," the capability of abstracting ideas. Enter the adolescent, "a psychologically complex, experienced individual, a talking-learning-playing-self-evaluating identity" (Snipes, 201); and, enter the composition teacher, whose job it is to get "students to use language to produce meaning... and the development of the language skill" (Collins, 214). If we are to understand the adolescent composition student then, we must first consider that he comes to us with a unique notion of the world around him, with the understanding that he is beginning a new and foreign experience, becoming an adult, and that his language development is as unique as is his personality.

The student comes to the composition classroom with his own individual life experience and, consequently, with his own theory of the world, which he consciously modifies with additional experience. One representation of this experience is language (Britton, 16). This individual identity, or life experience, or theory of the world, is what adolescents must use to understand and to define their world if "the ability to think in concepts (at least for some of the time) is to be achieved in adolescence by most members of our society" (Britton, 211). Growth toward this ideal, through which the students can abstract their future, is possible by means of personal journal writing as a component of the composition curriculum, given a nurturing teacher-student relationship in which to function. Britton further establishes that, as a "highly organized systematic means of representing experience, language assists us to organize all other ways of representing. It is our principle means of classifying, and it is this classifying function that goes farthest towards accounting for the role of language as an organizer of our representations of experience" (Britton, 23). It is this interaction of personal growth and language development that allows students to do exactly what is expected to modify their theory of the world: acquire knowledge and communicate to others that they have, indeed, learned.

Research shows that this world theory, or schema, may be the most important variable in determining the quality of comprehension (Squire, 28). The view of the world a student brings to his writing, as well as to the literature and situations about which we ask him to write, surfaces once again in comprehension theory. Researchers and theorists, however, have not thoroughly investigated the connection of this world theory to composition except to understand that "pupils write best about subjects on which they are well informed" (Squire, 28). Further, "because writing is often our representation of the world made visible, embodying both process and product, writing is more readily a form and source of learning. Writing involves the fullest possible functioning of the brain..." (Emig, 124-5). The learning processes of awareness, comprehension, and composing are inseparable. How well writers know themselves and their world directly affects their ability to communicate their thoughts. The journal provides time and space in which students can develop the voice with which to do just that (Macrorie, 3).

Still another element in human development is the notion of existential phenomenology, the understanding that "everything is a phenomenon, including self, other, and that which is the world" (Jacobs, 293). Kinneavy has established a composite of the self models of three existential phenomenologists—Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Gusdorf—in which there exist "combinations of different kinds of consciousness" which collapse into three: "a Being-for-Itself, a Being-for-Others, and a Being-in-the-World." It is through language that we learn about our beings and, consequently, modify our theories of the world (Kinneavy, 406). The composition teacher can provide the time and space for this individual development by having students keep journals.

Unless we provide students with extensive opportunities to write themselves toward some personal understandings, asking them to write essays involving their personal ideas and reactions to the world and to the literature assigned in composition classes is to ask them to play developmental leapfrog. In addition, demanding that students apply subskills of grammar and syntax without first exploring the self is like teaching vocabulary out of context; rules like unfamiliar vocabulary words, have no meaning for students. We frequently fail "to recognize that composing and comprehending are process-oriented thinking skills which are basically interrelated. Our failure to teach composing and comprehending as process impedes our efforts not only to teach children to read and write but our efforts to teach them to think" (Squire, 23). What we demand of composition students in their essays is invention, "a solitary activity; the writer takes to himself to find himself" (Moffett, 117), an act that depends on the writer's understanding of both himself and his world. Like thinking, "writing is also a process;... writing and thought are inextricably linked (Moffett, 117). What we offer students is too often an a la carte approach to language and writing, when we need to provide the most extensive developmental menu available.

Journals, a trusting teacher-student relationship, and time to allow the students to explore themselves and their environment contribute to growth of individuals both developmentally and as writers. Their goal is to communicate, as clearly as they can, their problems, their frustrations, their accomplishments, and their dreams. In the process, they have the opportunity to become better, more fluent writers, who know significantly more about themselves when they leave the class than they did when they entered. You have not exactly taught them how to write, but rather how to think logically, solve problems, and grow toward self-awareness, the stuff from which good writing can and will grow. Yes, they will protest writing a given number of pages a week, but by midterm my journal evaluations reflect a positive difference. Notice how student comments reflect their language, cognitive, and personal development.

> Journals helped me discover my writing style. Writing has always been my downfall and also something I dreaded more than death itself. Now when I finish writing, I am proud that I have written and think it is genuinely good. It all goes back to the positive input I received on my first journals.
>
> The journal gives me a chance to talk about my problems and maybe even work them out on paper. The journal helped me understand the way a paper should be coherent.
>
> The journal has helped me emotionally. It makes me think about things in more depth. It has made me think more analytically.
>
> Journals help me open my mind.

How does a conscientious teacher handle the journal pileup? If you teach 125 or more students a day, consider assigning five pages per week and collecting two or three classes a week; this enables you to read each student's journal every two weeks. Or, try using journals with one class first, as a trial and error period that helps you set your own schedules and limits. Since grades are judgemental and have the potential to inhibit students, I do not grade student journals. I prefer marking a check in the gradebook to indicate that students have done the writing.

That we are dealing with adolescents at a crucial developmental and decision-making time in their lives compels composition teachers to facilitate the development of that internal understanding Kinneavy describes in the composite theory. The journal is a functional tool in the composition classroom because it provides an outlet for students to learn about themselves, their responsibilities to the world and others in their lives, and more importantly, offers them the opportunity to gain perspective on the self. Journals require large investments of both student and teacher time, but I will continue to use them because I am convinced of their value as teaching tools. They contribute immeasurably to my students' growth in writing and learning.

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Discover Your Lemon

Millie Davis

I suspect that I am among many teachers of composition who have weekly handed out writing assignments and have weekly taken up uncreative, poorly thought out, and, therefore, poorly written papers. I am also one of the many English teachers who have complained about the inferior, uninventive writing of their students but have known no way to get them to produce better, more interesting prose. I think now that I have the beginning of a solution—prewriting.

Call it invention, discovery, planning, prevision, or any of the other more specific terms like dramatistic pentad or freewriting, prewriting is the first stage of the writing process. It is the time from the moment we decide we need to write until we actually begin writing our first draft. It is the time during which we conjure ideas, limit a topic, and plan how we will handle it. It is a personal time that can encompass activities as structured as notetaking or as unstructured as daydreaming. It can take as much as eighty-five percent of the writing process according to Donald Murray (essay in *Research on Composing*, NCTE, 1978) or little or no time as with Janet Emig's twelfth graders (1971). Prewriting may also recur in the writing or rewriting stages. Prewriting is an extremely important part of the process because it is the time for the writer to think. According to Rohman (1965), good thinking equals good writing; good writing cannot result from bad thinking. Therefore, prewriting time cannot be successfully left out of the writing process.

By directing prewriting activities, teachers can get students to write better. We can help them find their own uniqueness with a particular subject and help them, as Dorothy Sayers describes it (in Rohman, 1965), make an "event" an "experience." However, there is no foolproof method for causing such personal transformations to occur. Teachers need to experiment with many prewriting methods to acquaint their students with the ones most suitable to them.

Most of the published, suggested methods for prewriting may be divided into two camps of thought. One sort of activity is intellectual, structured, and scientific. It is applied to the subject to find something to say about it. Other types of activities are intuitional, unstructured, and creative. They are used by the writer to find something to say about his attachment to the subject.

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One prewriting example that combines both methods and works for me and my students is a lesson designed around the theme of "Getting to Know Your Lemon." I have a supply of lemons on hand, one for each student (I've also used oranges and a colleague has had success with peanuts). Via a directed writing activity (Blake, 1980), the student uses the overall framework from Pike's tagmemic theory (1964), enhanced by some perceptual and self-discovery exercises, to acquaint himself with the lemon.

I begin by giving each student a blank sheet of paper. I then give each student, or better yet, let him choose, a lemon from a bag. I instruct him to get to know his lemon and suggest that he take notes as he examines its unique physical appearance and performs tests such as rolling or bouncing. During this short time (maybe three to five minutes), the student uses his senses to study the lemon. He considers it as a self-contained unit. (This is step one of Pike's theory.)

I next ask students to work in groups of four or five to perform step two of Pike's theory—considering the lemon as it relates to the things immediately around it. For about ten minutes, small groups of four or five students hold "lemon olympics." During this time, their lemons are judged in categories such as color (e.g., lining up lemons with the darkest first and the lightest last, and making sure to note the lemon's position in line), length, fatness, smell, texture, or some other characteristic.

After the olympics I ask each student if he feels that he knows his lemon well enough to recognize it in a crowd. Most students will assent. I take back all the lemons and lay them in a bunch on a table or on the floor. Students then come up, a few at a time, to reclaim their lemons. After all the lemons are chosen, I make certain each student feels sure he has his own. (If there is a mispicked lemon, the students involved should negotiate to solve the problem.) This part of the activity should take five minutes.

For five minutes more, I again ask students to examine their lemons, this time thinking about them over a period of time (Pike's third step). Verbally I direct them to think of the tree from which the lemon came and the flower it was before it was a fruit and the seed out of which the tree grew. I ask the students to draw pictures or diagrams. Then, for about five more minutes, they hold their lemons while they scribble write (something between doodling and a preschooler's attempt at writing, but the writer does not look at what he is writing) a note to themselves about what they plan to do with their lemons.

One more five-minute sensory test will complete the acquaintance of the students with their lemons. I question the students again to assure myself that they feel confident they can recognize their lemons in a crowd. I take back the lemons and, with students seated in a circle, have them close their eyes and pass around the lemons. I instruct the students to open their eyes to check when they think they have found their lemons by touch. They continue to pass the lemons until all have claimed theirs.

Once each person has his lemon again, I hand out a writing assignment that has the students focus on the fourth step of Pike's theory—considering the lemon as a part of a larger context or system. The following assignment gives the student the latitude to look at the lemon as anything from a piece of fruit to maybe a friend:

> You are a student applying for entry into a special summer program in creative writing. You must write a description of a fruit. You may use poetry or prose. You may be as informal as a limerick or letter to a friend, or as formal as a eulogy or essay. Your description must be no longer than one page. Your writing will be evaluated for its creative choices of mode and language and for its effect upon the readers, a group of teachers from elementary, middle and high schools. Entrees must be submitted in one week.

I then ask students to brainstorm for the assignment by clustering (Rico, 1983) or making a jot list. The prewriting session is complete.

Finally, students need to review the entire experience, noting the various prewriting techniques they used and, possibly, discussing results and giving suggestions for other activities. The students will need class time during the week for writing and revision.

It is important to remember that good writing cannot be produced without good thinking. Students need to have the time and exposure to experience in order to find their own methods for thinking through a writing problem. Perhaps if we do provide the necessary initial "mind set" with suitable prewriting activities and then follow through by providing writing and rewriting time, the time we spend evaluating the final products will be more pleasant and productive.

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What's the Story? Moving Non-Mainstream Children into the Fictive Mode

Lynn Alvine

In order to understand what happens when we ask a student to write a story, we must look at what is known about how children learn to talk, for the children who arrive in our classrooms have traveled paths through their acquisition of oral and written language which may be very different from our own. Everyone who is neurologically normal has the same potential for learning to do things with language. Anthropologist Shirly Brice Heath has helped me to understand how not only the biological system, but also the cultural system of the individual is involved in learning language.

Suspecting that the home environment made a difference in the individual's way of coming to know and use words, Heath observed closely the patterns of interaction between children and their caregivers in "Trackton," a black mill community of recent rural origin, and in "Roadville," a nearby white mill community whose ancestors were of Appalachian origin. She found the patterns of learning to use language in both communities markedly different from the middle-class, literacy oriented townspeople often referred to as the "mainstream" of society.

The mainstream pattern generally includes a predisposition toward literacy, an expectation of a long period of time spent in an educational setting, an emphasis on secondary sources of authority, and a future-oriented nuclear family. Mainstream language learning follows a linear pattern of development, moving from labeling (ball), to making topic comment (ball lost), to giving attributes (big, red ball lost), to the introduction of running narrative (Jimmy left the ball in the street. The truck ran over the ball.). In this pattern of literacy development, a pattern that usually leads to success in school, the caregiver constructs what Jerome Bruner calls a "scaffolding" for the language learner. As the child places the "bricks" of his language competence into place and demonstrates language performance, the caregiver interacts by reinforcing competent performance and gradually increasing expectation so that growth is achieved. Thus, the "scaffolding" constructed by the adult moves in response to the acquisition of language by the child (Bruner and Ratner, 1978.) When mainstream children encounter this same literacy pattern in school, they continue the building process successfully.

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In the non-mainstream communities of Trackton and Roadville, there is minimal exposure to educational institutions, and the sources of authority for individuals in each community are primary (i.e., face to face with friends and family). Both towns contain mostly working-class families. Both place a high value on success in school, yet the children of both communities generally have difficulty with school and school-related learning. In Roadville, the caregivers "teach the children to talk." In Trackton, the children "learn to talk." School generally requires that children move through "what explanations" (What's the doggie's name?) before they provide "reason-explanations" (Why did the doggie run away?) or affective commentary (Would you be sad if your doggie ran away?). The children from both non-mainstream groups have difficulty in school unless they are able to adapt to "school ways." Some of them do adapt; many others do not.

The Roadville pattern of literacy events begins with the adult caregiver's introducing the child to bits and pieces of books. Roadville adults believe in books for entertainment, information, and instruction. Children are asked content questions which remain linear and sequential (And then what happened?). There is seldom any extension or expansion (How do you feel? What would you do?). In Roadville storytelling, there is strict adherence to personal experience and to the chronological. Fantasized stories or fictionalized versions of real life stories are looked upon as "lies" and are unacceptable (Stop that nonsense. Tell me the truth.). Bible parables, proverbs and real life stories with a moral are frequently told (He'll learn not to run into the street after cars.).

The result of this narrowly defined storytelling heritage is that the Roadville children are often unable to remove details from context (Doggies with sore legs have to be taken to the vet), fictionalize known events (What if our Brownie steps in a hole and hurts his leg?), or shift known events to other frames (My Brownie may have to go the vet some day.).

Roadville children perform well in the initial stages of the first three grades, but have difficulty when school tasks require them to extend or expand—as does the writing of "creative" stories. Roadville children find memorizing the facts of the story much easier than giving an affective reaction. And they experience difficulty when they encounter such questions as "What did you like about the story?" or "What would you have done?" Unaware of what it is that they do not know, the Roadville children's schooling success begins to unravel about the fourth grade.

In Trackton, socio-cultural patterns of literacy are as different from those of Roadville as they are from those of the mainstream. The Trackton children exist in a physically human environment, usually without carseats, infant seats, and cribs. They are carried on the hip or held in the lap a great deal of the time—facing the social community of the home, but without attention directed toward them. They are not seen as being capable of communication. Because of the close physical contact, they pick up the verbal and nonverbal rhythms of communication in their environment and develop communication perception at a very early age. Thus, most Trackton children are able to read non-verbal signals very accurately.

Without the interactive scaffolding of labeling and extension, the Trackton child comes to know and use language in three stages. His first meaningful utterances are repeated or imitated "chunks" of intonation contour—a general shaping of sound (Mother: "He'll pick up a form." Child: "pick up on.'). His second stage involves repetition with variation. He may repeat a "chunk" of the adult's speech and add to it or change part of it ("to do doctor, tractor, dis my tractor, doctor on de tractor"), but the Trackton child is without the same kind of interactive support given by adults that the mainstream child is given. It is only in the third stage of language acquisition that Trackton children participate in communication.

Eventually, they force the adult caregivers to respond to their utterances. A parent of a two-year-old Trackton boy once said to Heath: "Ain't no use me tellin' 'im: learn this, learn that, what's this, what's that? He just gotta learn, gotta know; he see one thing one place one time, he know how it go, see sump'n like it again, maybe it be the same, maybe it won't" (*Ways with Words*, p. 105).

Preschool Trackton children, then, are rarely talked to and almost never "talked down to." They are seldom asked "what-explanation" questions, but they are asked analogical questions ("What's that like?"). Trackton residents tell "true-stories," highly fantasized, non-chronological tales centering on or spun around a seed of truth or actual event. Trackton stories lack the formulaic beginnings and endings and the didactic quality of the Roadville stories. In *Ways with Words*, Shirley Brice Heath ends her chapter on storytelling with the following summation:

> ...neither Roadville's factual accounts nor their tales from the Bible would be termed stories in Trackton. Since Trackton parents do not read books with their children and do not include these in their gifts to preschoolers, they have no occasion to talk of the stories in books. In short, for Roadville, Trackton's stories would be lies; for Trackton, Roadville's stories would not even count as stories. (*Ways with Words*, p. 189)

Implications for Teaching

For those of us who would ask our students who have storytelling traditions similar to those of Trackton or Roadville to generate fictive narrative—to do "creative writing"—the implications of Heath's research are clear. Because the patterns of storytelling in students' environments during language acquisition have a marked impact on their ability to generate fictive narrative, we must find strategies which enable our students to arrive at a perception of the 'storyness' of fictive narrative.

Generally, perception precedes performance, and oral precedes written Until a child has a perception of "story," he will not produce a story; until he can tell a story, he will have difficulty writing one. In working with mainstream children, we may be able to define a story, show a model, make an assignment, and not be disappointed. But this strategy is often not successful with children who have not adapted to "school ways" with words.

Consider briefly part of what is known about thinking. Everyone who is neurologically normal has the same ability to use language to talk about feeling (affective), to talk about the here and now (episodic), and to talk about events not in the here and now (semantic). These three thinking frames operate all of the time, and none is a "higher" order of thinking. We want to provide classroom activities which will move students in and out of these three frames so that they become able to move themselves more easily. We do not want to shut down or block one frame for the others but rather to integrate activities so that students learn to integrate thinking frames and to function in all three at an optimum level. Though most people do not talk about feelings very often, the affective is always functioning. Roadville children especially have not attached many labels to their feelings. Their affective expression is through gestures and intonations rather than through the use of language to communicate feelings.

Research supports the principle that the patterns of learning and using oral language are replicated in the patterns of learning and using written language and that this replication is especially marked for the individual who learns written language after puberty. Ideally, this development of flexibility for the student goes on in the activities of the elementary school and is built upon through high school and beyond. Those of us who teach high school students who have not adapted to "school ways" can and must try to make a difference by providing all kinds of interactive opportunities to help those less flexible individuals move in and out of the three thinking frames. Students cannot develop this flexibility while sitting quietly at their desks looking at a book or a blank piece of paper. In addition to interacting with the text and the paper, they must interact with others in groups or pairs, with a tape recorder, with the teacher, and indeed with their own reflections in a mirror.

Immerse the students in stories. Tell a story to the class. Ask one of the students to tell a story. Divide the class into groups, and provide each group with a tape recorder. Ask them to record four or five stories and bring the tapes in a few days later. In the intervening class sessions, have the students read many different kinds of stories. Let them retell the stories of movies or TV shows in groups. Let each group choose a story for telling or acting out. Show a series of pictures or slides which form a narrative sequence and have the students write the events shown in the pictures into a story. Write your own version as they write. Let them see you as a storyteller and storywriter as much as possible.

Play some of their recorded stories in class. Focus with them on the "storyness" of these stories. Ask how they are similar, how they are different. Help them to generate "rules" about stories—their rules. Move them toward a basic pattern, or scripting, for stories.

Then focus with them on the relationships between oral and written stories.

How are they similar? How are they different? Have them tell a story into the tape recorder. Have them write that story. Have them read and listen to each other's written and recorded versions.

Have the students draw a story before they tell it or as they tell it. Have them draw a story they have written or told. Give them objects to draw. Have them write descriptions of objects. Show a slide or give each a picture and have the students tell the story of the slide or picture.

Give each group a minimal situation (a father, a mother, a teenage son eating breakfast) and have them improvise what happens. Add a complication (the son wrecked the car the night before). Have others record the dialogue of the role playing. Let them turn it into a story. What would they add? What would they delete? Again, suggest that they look at how the oral is different from the written.

Tell a "minimal" story to the class. Ask what they find to be the minimal elements of a story. Have the students tell and write minimal stories. Keep the students focused on perception of story and differences between oral and written stories.

Work for variety and diversity in selecting the stories. Use fables, myths, ballads, parables, anecdotes, short stories (classical and contemporary). Tap the works of Aesop, Edith Hamilton, oral tradition, Chaucer, the Bible, Shakespeare, Saki, Twain, and even your own grandparents.

Because I am limited by the discursive form of written language, I have given these activities in an order, but don't follow my order. Don't be concerned with moving from simple to complex, from classical to contemporary, or from speaking to reading to writing—or any other sequencing pattern. Turn on all of the channels at once.

For your own sanity, you will need a daily plan of attack, but the important thing is that you carefully observe what is happening and follow your intuitions. Tune in to the students' gaining of perception and keep them moving in and out of different frames of thinking.

None of us can change the reality of the diverging gap between mainstream and non-mainstream children in educational institutions across the country, but understanding the impact of socio-cultural backgrounds on the way children acquire oral and written language competency and on their perceptions of story might help us to make a difference for the non-mainstream children in our own classrooms. That is a beginning; it is worth the effort.

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Bridging the Gap: The Transition to Transactional

Terri Baker

In high school it is not uncommon for a student who has written beautifully expressive pieces throughout elementary and junior high to literally fall apart when assigned a formal essay. The conventional assumption by the English teacher is that the student needs more study of the essay form itself and more practice. Unfortunately, the solution is not that simple, nor is the teacher's assumption always accurate. Moreover, this stock solution explains why many students' skills and desire to write seemingly regress after the elementary years.

We, as English teachers, must consider the true complexity of the task required. First, metaphorically speaking, the switch from expressive to transactional writing, to use Britton's terms, is a shift from one language to another. If the student is successfully to cross this gap, a sequential progression is, more often than not, necessary. Moffett says, "One does not learn exposition just by writing it all the time.... All writing teaches exposition."[1]

Secondly, we must consider the student's relationship to the topic. If a student has little knowledge or interest in a topic, his/her success is doubtful. Research suggests that the student's development of some intrinsic purpose for completion of the assignment yields a better product. Britton, for one, asserts that, when writers write for themselves as well as for another audience, they are better able to bring the full force of knowledge, attitude and language experience to the task.[2] Reaching to the core of this concept, Jerome Bruner maintains that familiarity with the material is necessary for intuitive thought; intuition requires blocks on which to build and to work.[3] In developing the intrinsic motivation, real purpose is necessary. As Appleby indicates in *Writing in the Secondary Schools*, creation of context in which the writing serves a valid purpose is necessary.[4]

It seems that in solving the former problem, bridging the gap, teachers might ease their task in addressing the problem of topic. A series of carefully sequenced expressive writing activities might not only incite interest and motivation in students while providing information but also ease the burden of moving into the transactional mode. A strong rationale for this suggestion is couched in developmental theory.

Stage theorists such as Freud, Piaget, Moffett, Britton, Bruner, and

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Vygotsky support the concept of developmental growth which occurs in hierarchical stages, mastery of one stage being necessary before progression to the next. Freud's stages of emotional growth chronologically parallel Piaget's stages of cognitive growth. Moreover, Vygotsky's theory of speech development, for the most part, correlates to Piaget's schema. Further empirical research by Britton, Moffett, and Bruner indicates that a child progresses cognitively along increasingly more difficult levels of abstraction. (See Figure 1 for further explanation.) Current research in the teaching of writing treats it as a process paralleling the development of cognitive skills and emotional growth.

According to Moffett in *Active Voice*, "the higher abstractions that teachers look for in familiar essay form derive in stages from lower abstractions formulated more personally and fictionally at first."[5] It is the task of the composition teacher to simulate this invisible evolution in a concrete manner. Assignments allowing one kind of discourse to unfold from another, thereby allowing language experiences to build and reinforce each other, may accomplish this objective.[6] If student writers benefit from the sequencing of assignments in a K-13 curriculum, as in Moffett's *The Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum*, then perhaps on a smaller scale, a transactional assignment which evolves through several expressive writing activities is the path to bridging the gap.

A few comments on the charts and plans which follow are necessary. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate a series of discourse. While these activities naturally increase in complexity from left to right, they are also as much as possible vertically sequenced according to degree of difficulty. The accuracy, however, of this vertical sequencing is subject to question because much of it depends upon the individual student. The ordering in the charts is designed to enable their application at all grade levels. Conceivably, a primary school teacher might work from column one, Drama, with only a few selected assignments from column two, Narrative. For example, under the topic of family conflicts, the student might do assignments one through four under Drama and one through three under Narrative. Exceptional students might progress further either horizontally or vertically along the continua. A secondary school teacher, having the task of teaching the formal essay, might select one or two assignments from each mode of discourse as he/she proceeds to the generalization stage. It is important to note that the Drama, Narrative and even Correspondence stages constitute prewriting strategies or "zero draft" assignments. They do, nonetheless, merit teacher response and, oftentimes, publication or evaluation.

In Figures 4 and 5 I have adapted the same activities, in a more specific manner, to the writing process model developed by Wolfe and Reising in *Writing for Learning*.[8] In preparing these plans, I considered the product to be determined and worked the sequencing in the reverse. Generally, seven to eight days are ample time to complete the process as I have described it.

Fig. 1
Correlation of Developmental Theory

Freud	Piaget	Vygotsky	Moffet	Britton	Bruner
Emotional Development	Cognitive Development	Language Development	Types of Discourse	Types of Discourse	Modes of Learning
Decentralization		As abstraction develops, need for sound decreases/Thinking develops.	Decenters from egocentrism Increasing distance between subject and speaker	Increased public dimension/Increasing distance between audience and speaker	
Oral Stage 0-18 mos.	Sensorimotor 0-2 yrs.	Egocentric Speech	What is happening?		Kinesthetic (hand) Enaction
Anal Stage 18-4 yrs.	Preconceptual 2-4 yrs.	Increase	What happened?		
Phallic State 3-5 years.	Simple Representation 5 1/2-7 yrs.	Inter Speech	What happens?	Expressive	Iconic (eye) Transformation Perception Organization
Latent Stage 6-11 yrs.		Outer Speech			
Pubertal Stage 11-15 yrs.	Concrete Operations 7-11 yrs.	Thought	What will or should happen?	Poetic Transactional	Symbolic (brain) Representation/logical operations based on earlier physical manipulations
	Formal Operations 11-15 yrs.	(thought to word to thought)			

Fig. 2
Topic: Family Conflicts

Drama	Narrative	Correspondence	Generalization
1. Read different cartoons in the newspaper and write about the family conflicts you see.	1. Make a poster of helpful hints to avoid family conflict.	1. Write a narrative that develops a family conflict. Have someone in class perform.	1. Write an expository essay on the cause of family conflicts.
2. Watch a movie, a situation comedy, or a soap opera and list the kinds of conflict you see within the families you see.	2. Write a dialogue between two siblings which develops into a conflict.	2. Write a letter to Ann Landers seeking advice on a particular family conflict.	2. Write an expository essay on the results of family conflicts
3. In your journal describe your feeling after family conflict.	3. Write a letter to a close friend disucssing a family conflict you have just encountered.	3. Write a letter to Ann Landers as a parent asking advice or expressing frustration with a family conflict.	
4. Read the newspaper and find accounts that are results of family conflicts. Write about these in your journal. (How might they have been prevented?)	4. Write a monologue defending your position in a family conflict.	4. Compile the results of your survey on family conflicts.	
5. Talk to friends, siblings and parents about family conflicts. Record these ideas in your journal. Add your own comments.	5. Do the same activity, except become one of you siblings, not yourself.	5. Write a poem about a family conflict.	
6. Read a novel that contains family conflict. Describe this conflict in your journal.	6. Draw up and implement a survey on family conflicts.		
7. Make a cluster of all the family conflicts you have learned about through your investigation.			

Fig. 3
Topic: Runaways

Drama	Narrative	Correspondence	Generalization
1. View pictures of runaway children in magazines and in the newspaper and write your thoughts.	1. Write a monologue entitled "I Am a Runaway."	1. Write a peom about a runaway.	1. Write an expository essay discussing why teens run away.
2. Draw your own picture of a runaway and write what he is saying.	2. Write a journal entry about a day in your life as a runaway.	2. Write and perform a one-act play about a runaway.	2. Write an expository essay discussing what teens experience when they leave.
3. View a film or a movie about a runaway and give an account of what happens.	3. Write a poem by a runaway.	3. Compile your results of the survey or the interview about running away.	3. Write an argumentative essay in defense of or objection to a particular law regarding runaways.
4. Read letters or poems written by runaways and write about what they say.	4. Write a brief autobiography by a runaway.	4. Write a letter to the editor seeking assistance for runaways or expressing some other view.	4. Write an essay seeking to stir action in regard to governmental assistance for runaways.
5. Read selected articles from magazines and newspapers and list twenty facts that you find.	5. Write a letter to a friend who is a runaway.	5. Write a letter to the editor about the laws on runaways.	
6. Read an adolescent novel about a teen who runs away and write your reactions to each chapter in a journal.	6. Write a letter to a friend as a runaway.	6. Revise one of the laws on runaways or write your own laws regarding runaways.	
7. Write a diary or journal entry expressing your feelings about running away.	7. Design and implement a survey on running away.	7. Write a formal news article on runaways.	
8. Copy two or three interesting state laws regarding runaways. State your feelings about them.	8. Design and implement an interview with the parents of a runaway or with a teen who has run.		
	9. Write a letter from the parents of a runaway child to Ann Landers.		
	10. Write a news broadcast about a missing child and deliver it to the class.		

Fig 4

Bridging the Gap: Implementing the Process Model With Sequenced Activities

Topic: Family Conflicts

Previous Experience	1. Teacher writes the word *conflict* on the board.
	2. Look up the word *conflict* in the dictionary.
	3. Explore the meaning of the word as class and in peer groups.
	4. View a situation comedy or a soap opera or read various comic strips. List the types of family conflicts you observe and speculate causes.
Reflection	5. Review your list of types and causes. Check them for accuracy within your peer group. Compare your ideas and add new ones.
Selection and Zero Draft	6. Develop a role playing situation for members of the class to perform. Center the situation around a family conflict. Include parents and siblings in the narrative.
	7. Make a map with family conflicts in the center. Diagram the various conflicts within the home and relation-ships of the people involved. Use the information you have collected so far.
	8. Write a letter to Ann Landers as a parent expressing frustration or concern about family conflicts.
More Reflection and Selection	9. Closely analyze your expressive writings for activities five, six, and seven. With a colored pencil circle what you consider to be the causes of family conflict and write the zero draft for an expository essay. Topic: family conflicts Purpose: explanation of causes Audience: teens and parents Speaker Role: third person Mode: expository essay Flavor: serious and empathetic
Peer Review and Revision	10. Respond in terms of how the assignment meets the terms of the full rhetorical context in step nine.
	11. Student prepares a finished product.
Teacher Review and Revision	12. Respond and make suggestions for improvement.
	13. Student revises as necessary.
Publication or Evaluation	14. Send the letter to Ann Landers. The role playing situation has been published. Display the maps on poster-board throughout the school (teachers' cafeteria, nurse's office, display case, etc.). Put one or two of the best essays in the school newspaper.

Fig. 5

Bridging the Gap: Implementing the Process Model With Sequenced Activities

Topic: Runaways

Revision and Reflection	1. Make a journal addressing the following questions. (a) Have you ever run away or have you ever even considered it? Why? Why not? Under what circumstances? (b) Have any of your friends ever run away? If so, how did you feel? What advice did you give? How did your friend feel? Under what circumstances would you attempt to leave home? (c) What problems would you anticipate? (d) What questions do you have about runaways?
	2. Close your eyes and imagine yourself having just left home. You are on a bus traveling to New York City. It is late, and there are several strange-looking people on the bus. Record your thoughts.
	3. Read as much current literature on runaways as you can find. Use the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature. Which of your questions in activity one are you able to answer? What additional information do you find interesting? Take notes in your journal.
	4. Read Virginia laws on runaways. Write the ones you find interesting (good or bad) in your journal.
Zero Draft and Selection	5. Paraphrase or normalize the laws according to your interpretation.
	6. Rewrite these laws according to your views. (For example, you may write them to insure more protection for runaways.)
	7. Design and implement a survey of public opinion in regard to these laws.
	8. Write a letter to your congressman stating your dissatisfaction with the laws.
More Reflection and Further Selection	9. Review all the work you have done so far. Write an argumentative essay seeking to reform laws in regard to runaways. Topic: laws on runaways Purpose: reform or persuade Audience: educated public Speaker Role: third person Mode: argumentative essay Flavor: serious
Peer Review and Revision	10. Make comments in terms of how the paper meets the terms of the full rhetorical context in step nine.
	11. Preparation of a finished product.
Teacher Review and Revision	12. Respond and make suggestions for improvement
	13. Student revises.
Publication and/or Evaluation	14. Send the letter to congressman. The role playing situation has been published. Put the best essays in the school newspaper or post in the classroom. Submit any superior essays to the local newspaper.

The concept of sequencing assignments is an attempt to solve a problem; it is by no means a panacea. As Moffett cautions us against dangers inherent in sequencing, we must consider the uniqueness of each student, not locking him/her into predetermined categories.[9] There will always be exceptions. The challenge remains for every teacher to provide an environment compatible with and conducive to the student's emotional, psychological and cognitive growth.

Notes

[1] James Moffett, *Active Voice* (Upper Montclair, New Jersey: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1981), 146.

[2] James Britton, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin, Alex McLeod, Harold Rosen, *The Development of Writing Abilities* (London Schools Council Publication, 1975), 7.

[3] Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Howard University Press, 1966).

[4] Authur Appleby, *Writing in the Secondary Schools* (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1981), 105.

[5] Moffett, 4.

[6] Moffett, 5.

[7] Moffett, 13.

[8] Denny Wolfe and Robert Reising, *Writing for Learning* (Portland, Maine: J. Weston Walch, 1983), -7.

[9] Moffett, 9.

Developing Student Writing Through Creature Awareness

Madeline Hurt

Having experimented with traditional methods of teaching composition to high school students for several years, I search each new term for untried techniques and ideas to use with my classes. Results of this search provide for my students and for me a variety of exercises that are both challenging and rewarding. This fall I devised a project which involved skills in descriptive writing in poetry and in artistic expression. I drew from selections found in a small, two-volume publication titled *Prayers From the Ark* and *The Creature's Choir* by Carmen Bernos De Gasztold (Penguin Books) using a three-stage process in implementing the project. I carried out the project with four classes of eleventh and twelfth grade students enrolled in Advanced Placement.

First, I asked each student to assume the identity of an animal or insect I chose for each and to spend a weekend researching, observing, "becoming" the creature. Such information as the shape, form, appearance, habitat or special circumstances of its existence was essential. To "become" the creature, students were to think of the life struggle, the wants, needs, longings, and desires it would experience. What would be its reaction to its situation if it could take on human voice? What questions would it ponder?

Students used significant knowledge gained from their study of their "other being" to compose a first draft of an assigned writing exercise following the observation-study period. Those students in composition class who were studying descriptive writing were asked to write a two-page prose description remembering to include those details or questions I had posed in their discussions. An important aspect of the writing was to describe any feelings or thoughts the creature would express if it could take on human qualities. In the classes focusing on literature, the students wrote similar descriptive papers out in poetry. They were asked to develop an overall image or picture of the creature, again assuming the creature's identity. Both groups used a variety of techniques: simile, metaphor, personification, varied form, and suggestion. First person point of view would give greater intimacy to the description, I suggested. After marking rough drafts and suggesting revisions, I returned the papers to students for revision and rewriting in acceptable form. A period of two days was given for these revisions.

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In stage two of the project, I introduced students to writing from *Prayers From The Ark* and *The Creatures' Choir* by Carmen Bernos De Gasztold—a two-volume collection from which I had selected the initial list of creatures A discussion of the author's life, writing experiences, and sample selections followed as I briefed students on further exercises in the project. Each student received a copy of the companion poem from the two-volume collection to form a parallel composition for study. Remarkable similarities appeared between student writings and those of the professional writer, proving to be a delight to both students and teacher. The selections of De Gasztold expressed a beauty and an awe of the creator, and these feelings were often matched by the original student writings.

Stage three required that each student prepare a wall display on colored paper using both selections (original and professional) with appropriate illustrations. A brief quotation in French to signify a special trait in the creature was copied from the book to add meaning to the display. Only one class period was allowed for assembling the display since artistic value was secondary to the literary value of the project. Final projects were shared by classes, and selected works, displayed in the classroom.

I found this a stimulating exercise. Students gave serious attention to "becoming" another creature—one that was either ugly or beautiful. They also wrote creatively about the creature, employed good descriptive and poetic techniques in their writings, and developed a new awareness of nature as viewed through the eyes of a naturalist-writer.

A sample student poem and its accompanying professional writing follows.

THE PRAYER OF THE GOLDFISH

(Carmen De Gasztold)

God,
forever I turn in this hard crystal,
so transparent, yet I can find no way out
Lord,
deliver me from the cramp of this water
and these terrifying things I see through it.
Put me back in the play of your torrents,
in Your limpid springs.
Let me no longer be a little goldfish
in its prison of glass,
but a living spark
in the gentleness of Your needs.

—Amen.

(French Quotation)

. . . mais une etincella vivante
dans la douceur de vos jones . . .

THE GOLDFISH

(Student Poem)

Gracefully floating
through my water Kingdom
beautiful sights surround me.
Feathery plants
kiss the water's surface.
Mirror images of myself
splash by uninterested in me.
Pleasure lies in my daydreams.
For hours I stare
At the strange universe
enclosing my glass planet
thinking . . .
About the lives of my ancestors—
Ancestors free to roam
the lakes and rivers
of the ancient world.
Not so colorful as I,
yet free.
Ancestors treasured
by the Orientals
for their beauty—
made a central part
of the household.
Today,
I am nothing;
only a decoration
for this corner
of their universe.

—Paula Combs

Congratulations to
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Spelling: An Individualized Approach

Corazon D. Villareal

Although annoyed by misspellings, I have never really paid much attention to them, and I suspect neither do other college teachers. The reason for this neglect is valid. The ability to spell grows slowly out of different encounters with words—phonological, visual, kinesthetic, and semantic—and it would be unrealistic to expect students to improve their spelling in a lesson or two. Rather than devote time to spelling, many teachers focus on the larger concerns of writing such as substance and organization. Yet, outside of academe, the response to misspellings is less tolerant. To a personnel director leafing through application letters, an administrator reading reports, or an educated reader skimming through a newspaper, a grammar mistake such as a dangling modifier or an indefinite reference of a pronoun may not be obvious. They would likely spot a misspelling, however; and finding such a mistake might well be cause for their questioning the quality of the writer's education.

Can the misspellings of college students be brought under control? Can teachers help students devise a strategy for reducing them? A number of writers believe that teaching spelling is possible. John Keen in *Teaching English: A Linguistic Approach* traces the origin of misspellings to the fact that sound-symbol relations in English are not always consistent. To cope with such irregularity, he proposes setting up a paradigm that will bring out a pattern in the spelling of words. Graham Banks in "Spelling: A Broad Approach" writes of learning spelling through word division, a process in which prefixes and suffixes are the principal keys. Richard Van De Weghe in "Spelling and Grammar Logs" borrows from Lou Kelly's *From Dialogue to Discourse* in requiring his students to keep a spelling log. Lou Middleman in *In Short* urges students to discover patterns in the words they characteristically misspell. Paul Hanna points to syllabication as an aid to correct spelling in his book *Spelling: Structure and Strategies*. In another book, *Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondence*, Hanna advocates the study of graphemes as a means to improve spelling. The most specific and the most systematic among the articles I have reviewed is Mina Shaughnessy's chapter on spelling in her book *Errors and Expectations*. Here, she dismisses as ineffective and superficial the teachers' practice of writing marginal notes like "sp," 'look up words you are uncertain of,"

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or "proofread." Instead, she suggests a three-pronged approach: the observation of misspelling patterns, the exploration of causes, and the conscious nurturing of new spelling habits.

What I wish to illustrate is a strategy for the teaching of spelling based on a synthesis of this research. It is comprised of three steps.

1. *Begin where the students are.* Spelling lessons must start inductively from actual spelling mistakes that students have made, not from rules of grammar books. Some rules may not be needed or some mistakes may not be covered by particular rules. Moreover, using samples from students' work will give them a sense of immediacy of the problem. As illustrations, consider the following misspellings which my students made in a quiz on Argumentation: hungary (as in "sex-hungary criminals'), arguement, fallacie, trys, definate, adverteising, exiting (for exciting), diffrent, explaination, flexable.

2. *Construct a typology of errors based on the listing; that is, group the errors according to the possible causes of such errors.* These causes can be identified through an error analysis done jointly by the teacher and the student(s). Using the sample list, we could come up with the following groupings and their corresponding causes.

a. Some words are misspelled because they are spelled acoustically.

   definate and flexable—selecting an "a" for a schwa
   sound of "i"

   accidently—the "a" sound being omitted

   diffrent—the "e" sound being omitted

b. Some words are misspelled due to a lack of attention to root words.

   adverteising, exiting, hungary

c. Some words are misspelled because of unfamiliarity with graphemes (the various ways of spelling a sound in English).

   fallacie—"y" taking care of the long "e" sound

d. Some words deviate from certain patterns of spelling words.

   arguement—drops the middle "e" (an exception to the usual spelling of verbs with the suffix, *-ment:* management, measurement, settlement, advertisement)

e. If "s" is added to a word ending in "y" where "y" is preceded by a consonant, "y" is changed to "ie" after which "s" is added.

   trys—tries

3. *Devise a spelling strategy for the particular types of spelling mistakes made by a class or an individual student.*

a. where suitable, J. Keen's paradigmatic method can be used.

inaccess___ble
respons___ble
approx___mate
def___nite

b. For words where a misspelling in the root word occurs with the addition of a suffix, G. Banks' morphemic approach can be used.

Root	Suffix	Word
televise (-e) +	ion	= television
hunger (-e) +	y	= hungry
excite (-e) +	ing	= exciting

c. The Banks approach is applicable as well to correcting misspellings acoustic in nature.

Root		Suffix	Word
accident	=	al & ly	= accidentally
differ	=	ent	= different

d. A variation of the spelling chart as suggested by Van De Weghe and Shaugnessey could be done by the individual student.

Misspelling	*Correct Spelling*	*Letters Involved*	*Cause*
adverteising	advertising	ei/ie	2b
trys	tries	y/ie	2e

e. Using the dictionary to improve one's spelling still helps tremendously. In addition, the teacher can suggest to the interested students Pitman's *List of Frequently Misspelled Words*, J. Kreirsky's and J. Linfield's *The Bad Speller's Dictionary*, and C. Norback's *The Misspeller's Dictionary*.

Only a systematic and individualized error analysis and a painstaking cultivation of correct spelling habits will aid the bad speller. Obviously, writing teachers will have priorities higher than spelling, but they can put to use this approach in assisting students genuinely interested in improving their spelling skills.

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A Call for Manuscripts

The Spring 1986 issue of *Virginia English Bulletin* will have as its focus

> *Censorship: Textbooks, Libraries, and Everything Else in Schools.*

Shakespeare's plays in textbook versions, *A Catcher in the Rye*, or *Huckleberry Finn* for class discussion, *Forever* on a library shelf: censorship efforts never seem to go away. This issue of the *Bulletin* will look at the broad spectrum of topics related to censorship including actual cases, exploration of courses, parental and student reactions, and political dimensions.

Deadline for submission of manuscripts is February 1, 1986.

The Winter 1986 issue will have as its focus

> *A Critical Look at Literature Worth Teaching*

Rather than explaining ways to teach literature, these articles will offer critical analyses of short stories, poems, novels, or plays appropriate for students in grades 6-12. The articles can explore theme, characterization, structure, style, or any other subject of a work or works by one or more authors.

Deadline for submission of manuscripts is September 15, 1986.
1984

Two Methods of Using Reading in a Writing Class

Jenny N. Sullivan
Merle O. Thompson

Many of us have probably followed the same evolution in the way we use readings in the writing class. Novice teachers often spend entire terms discussing heavy-duty essays. It is so difficult to know how to teach writing that first year, so easy to be intellectual and "rap" about ideas. But after suffering the agonies of reading student "rap" papers for several terms, wrestling with "the meaning of freedom" and "the nature of infinity" on a daily basis, many of us overact. We become almost officious about teaching composition itself. We think that there is no time for reading in this class. No time to say "hello, goodbye," must write, must write, must write, must write. When the dust settles, we like to believe we approach the golden mean and learn how to use readings to focus on writing.

Reading and writing are certainly functions of one another; so our stressing their relationships never hurt a student. The sensitive reader learns more about writing if properly guided; and the conscientious writer, facing all the troubles that come with plying the craft, can be led into being a more appreciative reader. What follows are descriptions of ways to use reading in the writing class for more than merely generating theme topics. After all, does any instructor really want to read eighty-five (or even thirty-five) essays on "Truth is beauty, beauty truth"? The first is a simple class assignment that can easily be integrated into any existing structure for a composition course. The second is a total approach to structuring such a course.

Using Dictations: Writing to Read

While readings in the writing class are used for a variety of purposes, none will be served if the students' reading skills are poor. Short of requiring reading courses as prerequisites to composition, instructors can accommodate the problem of students' poor reading skills to some degree with an alternative to the traditional model of assigning readings, discussing them, and asking students to write a response to them. This alternative consists of giving short dictations of parts of the readings in advance of

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further study. Students compelled to write down a part of what they will later be expected to read and analyze seem later to read with more concentration and appreciation. The physical act of writing out a passage makes these students more intimately involved with material which they might otherwise merely scan. Furthermore, taking down dictations seems to help them discover that there is an infinity of forms, techniques, and styles of the written word. It seems to help them develop an empathy with writers as artisans. If, through writing down passages from their readings, they can begin to identify with people facing the same dilemma they must face, that of putting words on a blank page, they are on their way toward seeing themselves as writers. They are on their way toward recognizing that they have the same options and responsibilities as their professional counterparts in meeting the very same challenge.

The idea of writing down what one is reading is explained in Friedman and Mackillop's *The Copy Book*. Students are asked to copy sentences to learn their grammatical structure and are then asked to make changes in these copied sentences, altering such items as the verb tense, pronoun number, voice or even diction. Hunter and Beaty in the chapter on writing about literature in *The Norton Introduction to Literature* encourage students to copy poems that they are trying to read.

There is something to be said for the attention students are forced to give to a reading when they must write it down. But, of course, writing down everything one reads as a general rule in order to improve concentration would be tedious and impractical and would quickly bring on the principle of diminishing returns. Nevertheless, occasional paragraph-length dictations from passages students will be reading on their own later for class can be effective. They can help students appreciate how these authors are accomplishing their task of writing—not so that the students can imitate but so that they can see that there are options and that there is artistry in choosing the right ones. Many come to appreciate "style," a previously meaningless term for them.

The elements of style, broadly speaking, that can be taught and reinforced through dictations include varied sentence lengths, unusual sentence constructions, correct and effective use of punctuation, effective word choice, development of detail, vividness of detail, paragraph organization and coherence, effective paragraph length, and tone. That the students are noticing and learning about style comes out in their groans and laughs as they copy what they hear the instructor reading. Long sentences bring, "Whew." At the end of a passage, some will ask, "Can a paragraph be that long?" Generally they get a gauge for the length of their own sentences by seeing sentences generated by someone else reproduced in their own handwriting on their own notebook paper. Repetition in a passage often brings laughter; they can see the attempt at rhetorical technique and flair. Sometimes they even express an interest in learning the Greek names for these rhetorical devices: "Is there a name for doing that?" There are furrowed brows as they guess their way through difficult spellings and an occasional

"Wait a minute" as they realize they have wrongly anticipated a construction and now must go back and revise punctuation or capitalization.

Consider the following sample dictation (Table 1) from Alexander Petrunkevitch's "The Spider and the Wasp." It is annotated with reactions from the students to illustrate a few of the features of the writing that one class focused on and discussed as they copied what was being read aloud to them or as they compared their writing of the paragraph with the original copy they were later provided.

Passages randomly chosen from good pieces of writing seem to work; but speeches, essay conclusions, and selections with distinctive tones are among the most effective samples to use.

Table 1

1. But all spiders, and expecially hairy ones, have an extremely delicate sense of touch. Laboratory experiments prove that tarantulas can distinguish	1. "Yuk!" "Oooo!" (playful moans and groans of fear and disgust demonstrate an appreciation of tone in a single word)
2. three types of touch: pressure against the body wall, stroking	2. "Why do you use a colon here?" (introduces discussion of relationship of punctuation to sentence style)
3. of the body and riffling of certain very fin hairs on the	3. "What does that mean exactly?" (shows attention to unusual words)
4. legs called tricobothria. Pressure against the body, by a finger or the end of a pencil, causes the tarantula to move off	4. "This big scientific and word does not seem to belong." (demonstrates recognition of levels of language)
5. slowly for a short distance. The	5. "Could you have a semi-colon here?" (indicates awareness of options in sentence punctuation and initiates discussion of their relative value.)
6. touch excites no defensive response unless the approach is	6. "I don't understand how this word is being used." (shows an interest in unusual uses of common words)
7. from above where the spider can see the motion, in which case it rises on its hind legs, opens it fangs and holds this threatening posture as long as the object continues to move. When the motion stops, the spider drops back to the ground,	7. "Is it all right to have a sentence that's that long?"
8. remains quiet for a few seconds and then moves slowly away.	8. "Can there be a comma here?" (the logic of grammar confronts the new convention)

Directed Reading for Writing

A directed reading program evolves naturally from the following basic assumptions about attitudes toward writing. Simply, students write better if their attitudes toward the act of writing are better. Their attitudes improve when they de-mystify their use of language by mastering skills. The key terms for this mastery are process and pattern.

An instructor following such a program would begin a course with a process designed to ease students' anxieties about writing. An "easy" tone can be set by organizing the class so that most instruction is performed in peer groups with the teacher as coach. Every writing assignment, in-class or out-of-class, starts with brainstorming and freewriting in class. To provide skills needed to ease anxieties, the instructor concentrates on the patterns of language. Teaching begins with basic sentence patterns and efforts to merge such information into whatever knowledge of grammar students have brought from high school. Students move easily from these patterns to organizational patterns. Readings on language study provide meat for generous discussions about dialects, standard English, dictionaries, and language experiments involving primates. Students are usually relieved to learn that language is not a static pattern, possessed by hide-bound rules. All these activities lend students a degree of comfort with words and structures they have rarely experienced.

From that basis it is a simple matter to add instruction about the reading process, connecting it to the writing process in explicit ways that students can understand. An instructor might use a text such as The Norton Reader, which somewhat elevated in topics and language, purposely to "stretch" students and provide some difficulty in the reading process, so that they can watch themselves as they develop reading skills. They should be asked to monitor their reading process as they search for meaning. With some guidance they soon see that efficient reading depends on some of the same processes that writing does: guessing, risk-taking, feed-back, and instinctive reactions, among others.

To reinforce the similarities between reading and writing, students can use the following form (Table 2), which emphasizes *process* and *pattern.* Toward the bottom of the form are listed some elements of style that can be incorporated into the directed sessions after students gain some experience.

Each week the students are given one reading assignment and one writing assignment of about 500 words—sometimes in-class, sometimes out-of-class. The reading and writing assignments do not have to be connected. When students come to class, they are each handed the reviewing form (Table 2) for silent review of the writing. They use this form to review both the professional writers and the student writers.

For the professional essays, students work quietly for only about ten minutes because they have already read the assignment prior to classtime. They then break into groups to discuss their conclusions. These group discussions are followed by an instructor-led class discussion, during which patterns of writing should be pointed out and the students are led to speculate on the possible processes used by the writer.

Table 2
REVIEWING SHEET

Name of writer: ________________________________

Name of reader: ________________________________

Identify the following (Use paragraph numbers when possible)

INTRODUCTION

Thesis (explicit or implicit?) ________________
Clarification sentence? ________________
Organization sentence? ________________
Attitude and tone ________________

BODY

What kind of development is used? Comments? ________________

____

Unity: Does the essay stay on topic? If not, where does it stray?

____

____

Coherence: Pick one part of the essay and show some devices of coherence. OR

____

____

Show places in the essay where coherence is weak.

____

____

CONCLUSION

____

____

STYLE

Language (metaphors, connotative words, etc.) ________________
Sentence patterns (pick out one to imitate or improve) ________________

____

Indications of formal or informal ________________

****

GRAMMAR AND USAGE (pick out any errors you see)
GRADE YOU WOULD GIVE STUDENT ESSAY ________________

For their own essays, students exchange papers, finding a different partner each time, and work quietly for about one-half hour. They are not allowed to check with the writer during this quiet period. If they cannot understand the writer's meaning or spelling, that problem becomes part of their reaction. After the quiet session, they are allowed to work with the partner. At this point the partnerships work much like any other editing session. Writers are allowed to make as many revisions as they can during the class period: spelling, punctuation, grammar, even changes in whole sentences. A reader's reaction form is attached to each essay when it is submitted, and the instructor uses the reader's form for guidance and gives it, as well as the essay, a grade.

When a group of students who had completed this program were asked to evaluate the system, they reported that they enjoyed the order and symmetry of this kind of class work. Looking for patterns in sentences, paragraphs, and essays had become second nature to them. Their comments showed that they had made the connections between reading and writing. Several average students in this group expressed opinions such as these: "I learned to be more critical of my own writing"; "I learned to be a more responsible reader"; "I learned tricks to help me make my writing more interesting"; "It motivated me to work harder on my essays."

And, of course, they learned about writing for an audience, as is clear from the following comments: "I can now write so people understand me" and "I'm more careful to please the student reader when I write. It hurts more if your classmate cuts your paper." In addition, several up-tight students reported reduced tension. "It has reduced my anxiety to see how others do" (a common comment about editing groups). More significantly, several students agreed with their classmate who said, "I'm starting to enjoy writing for friends in the class." Another went so far as to say, "I got writing fever. I loved it."

Conclusion

What these two procedures have in common is that they both encourage the student to integrate reading with writing. They take writing out of isolation and help the student develop a sense of interest in the reactions of an audience. They help the student to develop the motivation to influence those reactions. The vitality that that kind of attitude can bring to student writing is a large part of what a composition course really should be all about.

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Cognition and Writing Research: How Applicable Is It to Instruction?

W. Michael Reed

One of the most pervasive directions in recent writing research is the recognition of the link between human memory processes and writing activities (see, for example, Flower & Hayes, 1980, 1981, 1984; Reed, 1984; Reed, Burton, & Kelly, 1985; Reed & Sherman, 1984). A question that might legitimately be raised in reaction to such research is "How applicable are these particular research findings to writing instruction?" Writing researchers are often accused of conducting research merely to investigate various factors involved in writing without caring to perform an important follow-up test: applying the findings to instruction. Certainly, a job that is important for someone to carry out is to apply educationally oriented research findings to instructional situations. Otherwise, much research will quietly collect dust on a bookshelf or slumber in someone's file cabinet. Thus, the purpose of this particular article is to present and synthesize some of the major findings of human memory/writing studies and suggest to writing instructors how they might incorporate such findings in their instruction.

In answer to the question about how applicable is such research, the answer is a well-supported, "very applicable" In fact, how we construct our writing instruction should often depend on what we know about how our minds process information. An appropriate starting point is to look at some earlier studies that have dealt with writing behaviors, the overt, measurable features of writing that reflect the mental processes associated with writing.

The Constraints of Processing Information

The major underpinnings of memory as part of the writing process are founded in the studies on writing behaviors (Emig, 1971; Perl, 1979; Sommers, 1979, 1980; Stallard, 1974). These studies have revealed that the three-stage description of writing behaviors (prewriting, writing, and rewriting) although valid, deviates across writing abilities and from a strict, linear fashion. Emig, Perl, and Stallard found that basic writers tend to spend relatively little time prewriting and rewriting compared to the more extensive prewriting and rewriting performed by better writers.

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Also, Perl found that writing is recursive, rather than linear:

> This "back and forth" movement appears to be a recursive feature: at one moment students are writing, moving their discourse forward; at the next they are backtracking, rereading, and digesting what has been written. (p. 330)

Sommers (1980) extended this notion of non-linearity even further by stating that writers often perform prewriting activities during the rewriting stage; for example, while revising their writing, they may sense the need to generate more content to get a particular idea across.

The previously mentioned studies refer to writing behaviors. To understand why the behaviors occur (in the case of good writers) or do not occur (in the case of poor writers), a logical source is the work by cognitive psychologists on human memory limitations (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1971; Craik and Lockhart, 1972; Miller, 1956). In a study almost three decades old, Miller reported that the human mind can store simultaneously between five and nine units of information in "conscious attention." "Conscious attention" is also known as short-term memory and, in perhaps a more appropriate term, as "working memory." Storing varying amounts of information allows people to switch from one thought to another very rapidly. Later work by Atkinson and Shiffrin and by Craik and Lockhart indicated that these "7 'plus or minus' 2" units of information have a finite lifespan once they are placed in working memory, usually no more than 30 seconds. So, while writers may easily switch from one "writing thought" to another with relative ease, dealing with one thought for a considerable amount of time may result in the other relevant thoughts "dying." Flower (1979) alluded to such constraints in a review:

> [Working memory] is the active central processor of the mind; that is, it is the sum of all the information we can hold in conscious attention at one time.... Its limited capacity means that when faced with a complex problem—such as writing a college paper—we can hold and compare only a few alternative relationships in mind at once.... Trying to evaluate, elaborate, and relate all that we know on a given topic can easily overload the capacity of working memory. (p. 31)

Based on these limitations, it is apparent that breaking a writing task into stages is crucial. If we are simultaneously generating content, formally elaborating the ideas, concerning ourselves with correct spelling, usage, and punctuation, finalizing sentence and paragraph structures, and establishing a "logical flow," it is easy to exceed the storage and time limitations of working memory. An approach that assists cognition is to limit one stage to the task of generating content; limit another stage to elaborating and formalizing these ideas; and then use a final stage to focus on revising the written piece for evaluation. Glynn, Britton, Muth, and Dogan (1982) conducted a study and found that approaching a writing task in stages resulted in better writing. One reason for the poor quality of writing by basic writers is that they try to approach all aspects of a writing task at one time rather than break the task into stages.

In their 1984 study, Reed and Sherman found that honors writers produced better quality essays when they were able to write down information generated during the prewriting stage than when they did not write down the information. Apparently, writing down ideas freed up space in working memory for more thoughts, resulting in a collection of richer ideas. Also students had a written record of their thoughts outside working memory, and thus were not dependent upon the limited capacity of working memory.

While this finding and its explanations may not be surprising, what worked for basic writers perhaps is. For them, spending the allotted prewriting time by just thinking about ideas was more effective than thinking about the ideas and writing them down. Rather than claim that the "no record" treatment was most effective and that we need to allow basic writers to follow this strategy, perhaps it is better to think of the "record" treatment as being less effective because it is not an approach used by basic writers. They had difficulty taking command of the strategy, thus it interfered with the writing process. This explanation is supported by other writing-behavior studies: basic writers tend to spend little time prewriting. What was least effective for basic writers seemed to be the method most different from their usual writing behavior; and, unsurprisingly, what worked best for basic writers (virtually no appropriate prewriting behavior) seemed to be the closest to their natural prewriting behavior. The overall quality of their writing, of course, was not as good as honors writers, using either method. Because our goal as writing instructors is to get our students to write better, we ought to help them become proficient with strategies that will, in the long run, facilitate the act of writing.

Placing Information in Working Memory

The previous section dealt with the processing of writing information once it is placed in working memory. Another area of cognition/writing research is the investigation of how the information gets into working memory. A common problem writing instructors face is helping their writers get started. Rather than interpreting "I don't know what to write" as meaning a student has no knowledge on that topic, a more accurate explanation may be that the student doesn't know how to begin.

Invention strategies, or heuristics, help writers generate and bring into working memory potential content for their essays. Often these strategies are a list of questions to which writers briefly respond, but there are other less formal heuristics (see Cowan & Cowan, 1980, for information on brainstorming, cubing, and looping). Such invention strategies give writers a starting point by helping them focus on a topic of their own choosing.

In terms of cognition, the questions serve as cueing devices that activate searches of permanent memory for information that might answer the questions. Then, they provide a systematic approach to generating content (see Table 1 for three heuristics devised for three different modes on the topic of drinking). The questions enter working memory and then serve as cues to retrieve related information from permanent memory, a writer's knowledge base of information he/she has previously processed. Because each question breaks down potential information into single thoughts, an invention strategy helps control the entry of too many "writing thoughts" into working memory. Likewise, the thoughts tend to be more related to the topic, thus lessening the likelihood of unrelated thoughts interfering.

In the Reed-Sherman study, the use of a heuristic which was based on Burke's pentad (1945) resulted in better writing by honors writers but poorer writing by basic writers. Again, it appeared that an unfamiliar strategy may initially be an interfering factor. Certainly before a strategy can be effective, the user's command of it must first be established. Better writers most likely went through some initial stage of stumbling with the strategies they now employ effectively.

This ussue is the primary concept behind the distinction between the terms *remedial writers and basic writers*. Poor writers are basic writers because they have not been taught or have not learned some of the initial steps of learning to write effectively. They are not writers who once learned how to write and then went astray, as the term *remedial* suggests. Once we learn that poor writers need to start at initial stages of learning how to write, rather than wasting our time *remediating* what they are already capable of doing, they have a better chance of improving their writing skills. With instruction and practice, basic writers can learn to use thinking strategies effectively.

Applications to Writing Instruction

Some writing strategies are more cognitively sound than others. The constraints of working memory make certain approaches more effective: 1) helping students focus on parts of a writing task rather than trying to handle the entire process at once; 2) having students use an invention strategy to generate content; and 3) allowing them to keep a permanent record of potential ideas outside the human memory system during the prewriting stage. Certainly this approach is not compatible with giving a writing assignment on Friday and having the essays due the following Monday.

One pervasive finding in writing research is that basic writers and more skilled writers have different processes. Because they do not have the same command of certain writing strategies, they should not be taught the same way. They simply have different starting points. Whereas better writers may not need as much instruction and time to employ effective strategies, there is a critical absence of such skills in basic writers. This point does not mean that better writers do not need the instruction and time, but rather, that basic writers need more. Because of what we know about the human memory system, a writing task for writers of all abilities should be structurally similar; the time involved and the content, though, should differ.

Table 1

Heuristics Devised for Each Mode

NARRATIVE	DESCRIPTIVE	PERSUASIVE
What has occurred?	Who is this person or what is this place?	What is the issue?
What are some words that specifically describe this occurrence?	What are some words that specifically describe this person or place?	What are some words that specifically describe this controversy?
Where did this incident take place?	Where is this person or place?	Where did this controversy take place?
What are some words that describe this place?	What are some words that describe the setting in which this person or place is?	What are some words that describe this place?
When did this story (incident) take place?	When was this person or place involved in drinking?	When did this controversy take palce?
What are some words that specifically describe the context in which this story took place?	What are some words that specifically describe the context in which this drinking took palce?	What are some words that specifically describe the context in which this controversy took place?
Who was involved in this story?	Who else was involved with this person or place?	Who was involved in this controversy?
How did the people involved in this story cause or help to cause it?	How did these other people contribute to the person or place involved in drinking?	How did the people involved in this controversy cause or help cause it?
What words would you use to describe these people?	What words would you use to describe these people?	What words would you use to describe these people?
What relationship did you have with these people?	What relationship did you have with these people?	What relationship did you have with these people?
Why is this story important to you?	Why is this person and/or place involved in drinking important to you?	Why is this issue important to you?
Could this incident have been prevented? If so, how?	Could this development have been prevented? If so, how?	Could this controversy have been prevented? If so, how?
OR	OR	OR
Would you want this incident to occur again? If so, why?	Would you want this development to occur again? If so, why?	Would you want this controversy to occur again? If so, why?
How has this story added to what you now know that you did not know before?	How has this person and/or place added to what you now know before?	How has this issue added to what you now know that you did not know before?
How does what you now know affect your decisions and relations with others	How does what you now know affect your decisions and relations with others?	How does what you now know affect your decisions and relations with others?

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What Secondary Teachers Should Know About Children's Writing

Mary Jo Wagner

As a high school English teacher, I was never really concerned about how young children wrote, but as I began to examine my high school students' writing process, I discovered that many of their individual writing habits were shaped in elementary school. Some of my students were more verbally proficient than others, and these students' writing skills seemed to be developing at a faster rate than my less verbal students. The more verbal students' stories were longer, and they were experimenting with more mature patterns of story development. My students rarely made notes or lists before they began writing, and some of my students' writings were still accompanied by drawings. Most of my high school students, however, had self-imposed standards for their writing and usually wanted to revise their writing when I gave them the opportunity.

Hoping to gain insight into children's writing so I could better understand and help my own students with their writing, I began to examine recent composition studies that explored the composing processes of elementary-school children (Sawkins, 1971; Graves, 1973 and 1981; King, 1979; Calkins, 1980; and Giacobbe, 1982). Although these studies provided me with valuable information, they offered little direction to teachers for developing strategies for writing instruction. Therefore, when I was given the opportunity to work with a group of fifth graders, I attempted to design a study that would reflect the actual writing they were doing in school so I could offer possible instructional strategies drawn from my results. These fifth graders had been encouraged by their language arts teachers since kindergarten to use their oral language skills in order to build their written language skills and, therefore, were accustomed to generating both oral and written narratives. Consequently, I designed a study to identify and analyze the differences between the oral and written stories produced by eighteen fifth-grade students in an academic setting. I also observed the students' composing processes in both types of situations and interviewed them about their composing preferences.

Some of my findings were consistent with those of other studies of children's writing, and some differed. The consistent findings suggest implications for teaching children to write, while the inconsistencies emphasize the need for further research in children's writing.

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A comparison of results from studies of children's writing indicated that both third- and fifth-grade children compose longer oral stories than written stories. King (1979) found that her third-graders' oral stories were longer than their written stories, and I reached the same conclusion with my fifth graders. This finding may reflect the basic differences between oral and written language expression. Because oral language evolves earlier and faster, these students may feel more comfortable with their oral language skills than with their written language skills, and the result is longer oral products. Speakers are more fluent than writers; therefore, they can focus their full attention on their intended message whereas writers must concentrate not only on their message but also on the physical act of writing to convey their message. For young writers the physicality of the writing process probably causes written stories to be shorter than oral stories.

These fifth graders also used few subordinate clauses, an average of four per oral and written story. Teachers seem to be working under the assumption that oral composing helps to build writing skills; however, my study indicated that fifth-grade students do not use any more complex sentence structures in their oral stories than in their written stories. Perhaps this finding reveals that oral composing is not making the contribution that we assume towards building writing skills.

King reported that her third graders predominantly used the simplest narrative pattern, "situation + problem + solution" (1979:3), in developing their stories. She called this Pattern A. My study was consistent with King's in reporting that Pattern A was the prevalent narrative structure in the majority of the fifth-graders' stories. These students may have relied on narrative Pattern A because it offers them a well-defined organizational pattern that they can easily follow. Fifth graders have perhaps outgrown what King labeled pattern B, repetition of the problem until a solution is found. King identified three other patterns that were more complex than either A or B. She labeled these C (a story with a reverse or surprise ending), D (a series of events connected indirectly), and E (events connected directly). In my study, the fifth-grade composers felt the most comfortable with narrative structure A and used it as the predominant pattern to develop their stories. When students chose pattern D, it was used more often in their oral stories—perhaps because the structure lends itself to oral language expression. Students, telling a story, tended to ramble through a series of indirectly related events with many digressions. When Pattern E was used, however, it appeared in more of the students' written stories than oral stories. This difference may have occurred because the written situation gave students more control over a complicated narrative structure. Because more fifth-grade boys than girls used narrative pattern E, the boys appeared to be experimenting with a mature pattern of story development.

Graves (1973) discovered that his second graders drew *prior* to writing as a rehearsal, and *after* writing to describe content. My findings, however, indicated that the one fifth-grader who drew *prior* to writing did not use it as a rehearsal but saw the finished illustration as a complete visual product.

The fifth graders who drew *after* writing used their illustrations to provide further character description or to emphasize main events in their stories. As with Graves' second graders, some of my fifth graders felt that their writing did not require drawing when the writing itself fulfilled their purposes. These findings may indicate that older children do not use drawing for prewriting but instead use it to make up for deficiencies they discern in writing.

Studies of children's writing have also examined students' planning strategies. Sawkins (1971) found that most of her fifth graders did not have the complete story in mind before they began composing and proceeded to compose without first having made notes or an outline. I found, however, that my fifth graders said they had the complete story in mind before they began composing, and some of them chose to write plans before they began. I could not determine the composing factors influencing these findings; however, one explanation for students' writing plans and determining plot development prior to writing might center on prewriting activities, such as brainstorming, that had been introduced to these fifth graders as part of their writing instruction.

Both King's (1979) third graders and my fifth graders agreed that the biggest problem associated with oral composing was losing their train of thought while telling their stories; therefore, the majority of the students preferred the written composing situation rather than the oral composing situation because they felt writing provided a greater sense of control over their individual composing processes. The students' short term memory may have prevented them from effectively storing and organizing the information during oral composing, while the written situation provided them with a visual structure to deal with the information. In the writing situation, students could reread their text in order to regain the logical flow of their thoughts. This need for visual cues as a way of handling short-term memory deficits may also explain why some students chose to write plans before they began composing in both the oral and written situations. It may also indicate to teachers that oral composing is more appropriate for use with younger children and children who are less verbally proficient than with more mature students.

Studies of children's writing have reported that revision is an important component of students' individual composing processes. Giacobbe (1982) discovered that her first graders had self-imposed standards for their writing. I also concluded that my fifth graders had established criteria for evaluating their stories, and their judgments about their writing were somewhat consistent with trained raters' and other fifth-grade raters' assessments of the stories. These findings may reflect the students' awareness of the writing process and their involvement in peer evaluation writing groups in their language arts class. Students may also be using criteria for story structure derived from their reading to evaluate their own stories. Because the students viewed their stories as first drafts, they revised them both during and after composing sessions. Calkins (1980) also reported that her third graders revised during different stages of the composing process.

Other studies of children's writing have revealed major differences between boys' and girls' writing. These studies have concluded that girls tend to perform better on school-initiated writing tasks than boys. However, I found that the boys in this study wrote stories of higher quality and with more mature patterns than did girls. Perhaps my overall findings are an indication that boys at the fifth-grade level had matured and reached the same developmental stage as girls, enabling the fifth-grade boys to perform as well on school-initiated writing tasks. Graves (1973) found that second-grade girls wrote longer products than the boys and used first person point of view more in their writing than second-grade boys. My findings paralleled Graves' findings in that girls wrote longer products than boys and the majority of the girls used first person in their written stories while the boys preferred third person. The girls' predominant use of first person in their written stories may indicate they feel more comfortable acknowledging their writing than boys. When these girls used first person in their writing, they identified themselves as a character in the story while the boys used third person perhaps because they did not want to identify themselves. Fifth graders may prefer using first person in their written stories but third person in their oral composing for much the same reason. In the oral situation students receive immediate feedback from their audience and, therefore, may be less willing to accept ownership of their compositions than in the written situations where students can only predict audience response. The immediacy of the audience during oral composing may cause many students to feel uncomfortable with their compositions and to expect criticism from their audience. During oral composing, third person allows students the opportunity to distance themselves from their audience, perhaps in order to avoid criticism. Because the audience is more distant during the written situation and, therefore, feedback is not immediate, students may feel more comfortable using first person and identifying themselves with their writing.

Graves reported that second-grade girls use more primary settings relating to home and school than secondary settings beyond their home and school, which were preferred by the boys. I discovered, however, that there was essentially no difference in these boys' preference for secondary or primary settings. My study indicated that fifth-grade girls used more minor characters in their stories than the boys. But, my study also revealed that the fifth-grade boys used more complicated narrative patterns than girls, for example, a series of events that are directly related, in developing their stories. These more mature patterns may explain why boys' stories were rated higher than the girls'. Sawkins (1971), however, reported that fifth-grade girls wrote compositions which were judged to be of high quality, while her boys wrote compositions which were judged to be of low quality. Evaluators, however, agreed that the fifth-grade boys' stories in this study were good and ranked the girls' stories lower.

The consistent findings between the studies of children's writing suggest several implications for teaching children to write. First, since the fifth graders preferred writing their stories to telling them, teachers might need to rethink their use of oral composing activities in the language arts classroom in the later elementary grades. Beginning in kindergarten, we encourage our students to tell stories orally rather than write them because the physical act of handwriting is slow and difficult for most younger students. However, as students' handwriting develops, we provide more opportunities for them to write their stories rather than tell them. Most students by the late elementary grades have generated numerous oral stories and are ready to attempt other oral communication skills, such as learning to give clear, understandable oral directions and mastering public speaking techniques. Therefore, teachers of older elementary children might review their use of oral composing activities in the language arts classroom and adjust them to meet the needs and concerns of their students. Oral activities in the late elementary grades should no longer be used to simply enhance writing development but also to reinforce the oral language skills that students already possess and to help students make the transition into more varied oral communication skills.

A second implication is related to revision. Because my students had typescripts of both stories, they saw them as first drafts and asked to revise them, demanding specific feedback on both their oral and written stories. Transcribed oral stories can be treated as written products and revised more easily. If language arts teachers continue to have their students create oral stories in the upper elementary grades, they should provide the students with the same, specific feedback they give the students' written stories. Students need clear purposes for creating oral stories, and they need constructive audience responses. If we provide the appropriate feedback for both our students' oral and written stories, we must also provide time for our students to revise them.

Allowing students to choose their own topics was a third implication that resulted from my study. The majority of the fifth graders did not like the topic I had selected and imposed upon them. Deciding on what to say is probably the hardest and most important part of writing. Teachers should be aware that, by taking this responsibility away from their students, they are also taking away the opportunity for students to be fully committed to their writing. Teachers should allow children freedom to choose topics and help children expand their ideas, encouraging them to write about topics they care about. When we impose topics on student composers, the writing becomes more school-initiated and less student-initiated, resulting in writing to which students are not totally committed (Graves, 1973).

The majority of these fifth graders used the most common story structure, past tense and third person, to write their stories. Therefore, to encourage greater variety, teachers should urge their students not only to write about personal experiences and concerns, but also to use various modes, present tense, and first person when appropriate. Therefore a fourth implication of my study was that teachers need to use a variety of writing activities with their students that encourage the use of these structural features.

A fifth implication is based on the fact that these fifth graders viewed drawing as an essential part of the written composing process that led to a more complete product. Language arts teachers particularly at the upper elementary and middle school levels, need, therefore, to continue allowing children's writing to be accompanied by their drawings. We should give these older students the freedom to draw and view their illustrations as an important part of their writing. Since these students used illustrations because they felt a part of their written story was lacking, their drawings could provide a basis for revising their writing. Teachers should ask students to revise their writing according to the additional information given in their illustrations.

These fifth-grade students had standards for their stories, and their own assessments of their stories agreed with the evaluations of both the trained raters and other fifth graders who assessed the stories. Consequently, a sixth implication is that teachers should encourage their students to set standards for their own writing and for peer evaluation. When we feel confident that students will assess their writing appropriately, student feedback can become part of the revising and editing process.

A final implication involves student-teacher conferences. I learned about the composing needs and concerns of these fifth-graders when I asked them to talk about how they went about creating their oral and written stories. Writing conferences with students should be a component of teaching children to write in the language arts classroom. Not only do such conferences provide an opportunity for students to receive appropriate feedback about their writing, but conferences also allow teachers to learn more about the composing needs and concerns of their individual students.

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Winter 1985 issue of *Virginia English Bulletin* will have a double focus:

(1) *Literature for students, Kindergarten through Grade 12*

This theme may include such diverse topics as using imaginative literature to teach reading, Southern voices in literature, individual response, teaching literature selections, patterns of organizing the study of literature, literary selections appropriate for designated students, et al.

(2) *To achieve peace, we have to work at it*

The English classroom is a place for questioning, reflecting, probing concerns of the human condition. Achieving world peace is such a concern. What is our responsibility in the classroom to help students develop perspectives about this concern? Should we assist students, for example, in achieving conflict resolution abilities? Is there literature which explores peace in families or communities? Literature which explores conditions of war and peace? Are there writing assignments which permit students to reflect on this concern? Is there attention in the classroom to examining oral rhetoric that promotes or discourages peace? (If, for instance, we say we need more advanced weapons to threaten the enemy so that we maintain peace, are we promoting peaceful or belligerent attitudes?)

Deadline for submission of manuscripts is October [illegible], 1985.

Great English Teaching Ideas: Writing and the Creative Connection

Beatrice Naff

My freshmen students nearly always have set ideas about creativity. Many of them know that choreography is creative, while the musicians in the group naturally assume an original score "scores" in creative circles. Few ever question the credibility of real artists—students who paint or design—nor do they resist accepting the culinary arts as a legitimate art form. Perhaps the television show *Fame* has had something to do with it, but creativity is definitely in, and we English teachers should begin building on our students' new-found respect for creativity. In our composition classes we would do well to stress not only the *writing process* but its relationship to the *creative process.*

In *The Creative Process* (University of North Carolina Press, 1952), Brewster Ghiselin presents a four-stage process. The first stage is called *Hard Work.* In this stage, creators start to brainstorm. They read, research, sketch, talk with others, take notes, and look at their tasks from a number of perspectives. The second stage is the students' all-time favorite. In this stage the creator is *Doing Nothing* (apparently). This is an incubation period, a time to let the hard work grow on its own. The third stage is a product of the first two: *Inspiration!* The idea or right plan hits you. It starts to come together often at a time when you least expect it. The fourth stage is appropriately called *More Hard Work.* Here, a creator takes his/her inspiration and transforms it into a logical form. This form makes the original inspiration clearer for both the creator and the audience.

In a successful writing class, teachers have students carry out all of these activities. The prewriting stage includes the first three stages of the creative process (*hard work, doing nothing, inspiration*). In this stage, students brainstorm, freewrite, loop, try out novel perspectives, read and research. The writing and postwriting stages cover the fourth stage of the creative process (*more hard work*). In the writing stage, our students shape up their inspirations. They make rough drafts while thinking about audience, purpose, and design. In the postwriting stage, they revise, delete, check out word choice, and play around with sentence flow. When they complete the process, they will probably feel like other artists. If it is good stuff, they will want an audience's reaction.

After introducing the creative process and its relationship to the writing process, we can have our students generate a list of everyday products or productions that seem to be the fruits of creativity. Some of these questions

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Beatrice Naff supervisors student teachers at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg.

may get them going. When Willie sits on the bench whittling away, does he engage in the creative process? Does the prom committee make use of creativity? When you design your future home, will that be a creative act? When students start to see the connection, they can interview creative community members and then share their findings with the group. To prepare the students for this interview, the teacher might invite creative people to the classroom. They might be architects, basketball coaches, interior designers, or choir directors. As they interview one of these people, the students will discover for themselves those questions which work best. Finally, the students might reminisce about a time when they engaged in the creative process. One of the students might have built a car for the soap box derby, put on a festive party, designed a wardrobe, or made a computer program. After they have had time to think, they might decide to share that experience in writing, another creative act.

Writing with My Students

I've found that one of the best ways to get students to view writing as a creative process is to write with them. As the students watch me scribble, pause, think, and rewrite, they begin to realize that a piece of writing takes thought and requires work to shape—that it is a creation. And when we share our finished pieces, students begin to develop a respect for their own writing because together we have struggled to make meaning on a blank page, to create something that did not exist before, to make a reader laugh or cry to see something more clearly.

There are also other advantages to writing with my students. When I do the assignment, I discover the problems that the students confront as they write, and that discovery prepares me to help them find solutions. I've also found that I have fewer discipline problems when I write with my students because, while I am busily occupied with the same task, they have no one for whom to misbehave. Moreover, if they see that I'm willing to do their assignment for the sheer pleasure of it, they too begin to delight in the creative process.

Debbie Taylor
Student teacher at Blacksburg High School (Montgomery County Schools) and a 1984 Richard A. Meade student teaching scholarship winner

Student Writers at Work

"Why do I have to write anyway?" a student asks. I used to give the typical teacher answer: "You'll be expected to know how to write next year." Of course, this answer is true, but I now see a more important reason for my students to write: writing is a powerful way to think.

I also want my students to see themselves as writers and experience the beauty of being able to create something for a real audience. This year, therefore, I proposed to my eighth grade students that they write, publish, and sell their own magazines. I selected student editors based on written applications that included a detailed description of the magazine they envisioned and the specific reasons for applying for the job as editor. Editors then interviewed other student applicants and selected their individual staffs. Each class published four to six magazines, each focusing on special interests such as fashion, football, movies, music, school news, and student polls.

Based on editors' assignment sheets, staff members during the next two weeks wrote articles, completed art work and layouts, sold advertisements, contracted with printers, and sold subscriptions. Most groups sold 150 copies of their magazine for 10 to 25 cents each. All the magazines broke even, with printing costs averaging about $40 per magazine. My students not only experienced the joys of publishing but also made enough money to publish a creative writing magazine for the entire middle school. The students donated copies of the magazine to the school library, where they frequently are read by both students and teachers.

I am enthusiastic about my new role in the classroom. Because the student editors are in charge, I simply become a helper, a writing consultant. This "real world" writing experience has encouraged my students to engage in other kinds of writing. The same English classes have just completed writing "I-Search" papers, Macrorie's alternative to the traditional research paper, and my honors English class is writing a composition textbook for next year's eighth graders.

—**Rick Hughes**
Blacksburg Middle School
(Montgomery County)

Finding a Starting Point

Often the "blank page" panics student writers, and even the most stimulating brainstorming activities fail to provide a starting point. When this happened in my class, I decided that I had to try something different. In the process, I rediscovered the wonders of debate.

My objective was to have my students write a composition on the ethics of the lab experiment that takes place in *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes. To get them started, I located two recent articles that dealt with genetic engineering. The first article contained a discussion of artificial insemination, embryo freezing and test tube babies, and the second dealt with gene splicing, disease control and cloning. I summarized the articles and listed some pertinent scientific breakthroughs. I then split my class into four groups and assigned each group a pro or con view of one of the articles. They worked as a group to prepare their case and then the "battle" began. They discussed, argued, and even at times became enraged.

When all of their emotions and ideas had surfaced, I had them write down their personal opinions in a ten-minute freewriting exercise. I brought these papers out a few days later and sent the class to the library to find current events that supported their positions. The students were writing an argumentative paper, but they were not facing a blank page at this moment.

Martha McFadden
Student teacher at Giles High School (Giles County)

The Canterbury Tales Revisited

Each year my seniors look forward to graduation and a long-awaited trip to Myrtle Beach. Aware of their all-consuming interest, I place *The Canterbury Tales* in this modern context. The class plans a twenty-hour bus trip to the beach, ten hours each way. Each student writes an entertaining story, one that reflects the writer's personality as does the "'Wife of Bath's Tale." As a prologue to these Myrtle Beach Tales, the students interview each other in pairs. The class first brainstorms some questions to get the interviews started. With information gained from the interview, each student writes the part of the prologue about his/her interviewee.

We compile these stories to serve as entertainment on the trip, but more importantly they serve as a "second annual," a collection of memories of fellow students. Although students demonstrate an understanding of voice and audience in their final products, I do not grade this assignment. The response from their peers is a sufficient evaluation.

Phyllis Chester
J. J. Kelly High School (Wise County)

A "Cool" Revision Process

After my students engage in prewriting strategies and write a first draft, I collect the drafts and hold them for several days to let them "get cold." When I give the papers back, the students are able to read and evaluate their ideas more objectively during the process of writing a second draft. Students work in pairs to revise their second drafts. Most writers choose the option of getting another reader for their third draft before submitting a final copy of the paper.

With this process, the amount of time between the initial assignment and the final product is considerably longer than if students immediately began rewriting their first drafts. I find, however, the "cooling off" period helps students approach the revision of the first draft from a fresh perspective and gives them a clearer sense of their options as writers.

[illegible] Campbell
Laurel Park High School (Henry County Schools)

Reviews

C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon. *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1984, 171 pp., $9.75. Reviewed by Howard Crouch.

Readers of *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing* will either agree whole-heartedly or disagree vehemently with the thesis of the book. No one will remain neutral. Professors Knoblauch and Brannon argue that writing teachers are depending upon ideas about classical rhetoric that are out-moded and philosophically untenable. The authors have presented rather convincing evidence that a shift in epistemology—views of the nature of knowledge and the relationships between knowledge and discourse—has occurred during the past four hundred years and has made classical rhetoric illusory, pedagogically unsound, unproductive, and false. Instead the authors argue that modern rhetoric observes the complex, organic processes of individual writers without any prescriptive intent.

Throughout, the authors present brief but clear discussions of both classical and modern rhetoric and show quite graphically how a writing classroom works from each philosophical perspective. Most importantly, Knoblauch and Brannon also claim that the two modes are incompatible and cannot be pedagogically mixed in the writing classroom. They contend that such a smorgasbord leads to confusion in the minds of inexperienced writers and to inconsistencies in the pedagogical objectives and goals of the teacher.

Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing is quite timely for teachers who have any degree of responsibility for choosing rhetoric texts for use in their classrooms. The authors give many examples of inconsistency of philosophical assumptions in many rhetoric texts. In their own words:

> *There is more than mere inconsistency at stake here; the smorgasbord approach is indeed inconsistent.... The major problem with a pedagogical smorgasbord is its failure to distinguish plausible ideas about writing and learning to write from those that are implausible, mixing them in the interest of variety with no consideration of their intellectual validity or methodological pertinence. Ancient rhetoric is too limited in certain critical respects to be an adequate foundation on which to base teaching practice.... (16-17)*

In addition, the writers attack the thorny problem of evaluating writing. They agree that one ultimate concern of writing instruction is improved ability among student writers. However, they question strongly the positivist position that measuring improvement in a set of sub-skills—assuming they exist—evaluates improvement in writing. Given the philosophical basis for their assertions in the text, no other conclusion is possible for them.

The book contains a great deal of evidence that supports the writers' thesis. Despite an occasional stridency of tone and an "evangelical" attitude, the authors have made a rather compelling case. However, their contention has only made the public school English teacher's dilemma worse because most textbooks and many school curriculums include the smorgasbord approach that Knoblauch and Brannon convincingly reject.

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Marian M. Mohr. *Revision: The Rhythm of Meaning.* Boynton/Cook, Publishers, Inc., 1984, 192 pp., $9.50. Reviewed by Mary K. Healy.

Some years ago I wrote a small monograph for the Writing Project publication series on using small response groups in the classroom. The material in the book came straight from my teaching practice; and, while I liked what I wrote because it seemed to capture what actually did happen in my classroom, I regretted its brevity. I often thought that someone should write a *teacher's* book on all aspects of revision, not just response, and base the book on what actual students and teachers said and did and thought.

Now Marian Mohr, a secondary English teacher for twenty years and the Co-Director of the Northern Virginia Writing Project, has written that book, and I am delighted to say that it goes far beyond what I hoped someone would do. Mohr has provided all of us with a magnificent compendium of possible solutions to the problems of teaching our students to revise.

Equally useful for students as a textbook or for teachers as a sourcebook, *Revision: The Rhythm of Meaning,* is full of both Mohr's thoughtful analyses of the different aspects of the revision process and practical assignments and strategies which create the classroom context in which revision actually does take place.

This combination of the practical and the theoretical/analytical is the result of a four-year research effort by Marian Mohr in her own classes. She assigned logs in which her students kept a running account of their revision processes, interviewed her students about their individual revising strategies, kept an observation log of what went on in her classes, collected drafts by both student and professional writers, and read widely in the literature about revision. Her superb book is a compilation of all this material, arranged in chapters which examine revision set in the larger context of writing as an act of human exploration, discovery, and communication.

Each chapter examines a different aspect of revision. Besides Mohr's thoughtful analysis, extensive drafts of students' writing are included. The sub-divisions of each chapter also include one or more sections called "Suggestions to the Writer" and "Suggestions for the Class," enormously practical and usable strategies for teaching revision. Embedded in these suggestions is a wide variety of writing assignments. In fact, my only criticism of this book is that some of these embedded assignments are so rich with possibilities that they deserve chapters of their own.

In the chapter called "The Goals of Revision," Mohr sketches out the broad purposes for teaching students to revise—the achievement of meaning and the achievement of form. She goes on to differentiate between the stages of revision: "Early revisions help achieve meaning for the writer; later revisions work toward communicating the meaning to the reader" (p. 34). In addition, and realistically, Mohr acknowledges that not all school writing can have extensive revising periods; some writing, of necessity, must be completed in a limited time. She offers suggestions for those situations too.

I especially liked this book's wonderfully individual voices—students, professional writers, Mohr herself—speaking candidly about writing and revising. For example, scattered liberally throughout the book are boxes setting off a series of quotes from students. These quotes are particularly fresh and original as, for example, the student who calls revision "trudgery" and another who defines revision thus: "Revising is when you take a little out or stuff something in to a paper." Other favorites of mine were the student who said "I usually (always) write my conclusions during lunch" or the one who found "I cannot think if I have my legs dangling." Yet another student complained, "I live in terror supposing that some day I may have to diagram one of my sentences." Finally, I enjoyed the tone in one student's research paper log entry: "Organization has been going well. I have had to rearrange some paragraphs that I thought were out of place. My thesis appears to be holding its own."

To help students get to the point where the thesis can begin to hold its own, Mohr includes a richness of practical aids: a classroom chart of what she expects of the students at different stages of the writing process, revision check lists for different drafting stages, instructions for small groups for a variety of purposes, suggestions for teacher responses, and, best and bravest of all, examples of her own written comments to her students.

I could go on. But I will end by saying that Marian Mohr, writing about the writing and revising of her students, convinces me entirely that I am reading the work of a master teacher/scholar who knows schools, students, and the struggle and joy of writing from the inside out.

Mary K. Healy
is co-director of the Bay Area Writing Project. This review is reprinted from the National Writing Project Newsletter, *September 1984.*

Jan Turbill, editor. *No Better Way to Teaching Writing!* Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1982, 96 pp., $6.00. Reviewed by Sandra L. Frazier.

If a title should succinctly describe what is contained within a book, then *No Better Way to Teach Writing!* certainly fulfills what it purports. This book is an outgrowth of the St. George Writing Project conducted in Australia and reports elementary teachers' impressions and results after implementing the conference-process approach to writing in their classrooms. The book provides the philosophy supporting this writing approach and supplies evidence of its success and outlines it so that an elementary teacher can feel comfortable trying it.

The format of the book makes for fast and easy reading. The chapters outline the important steps for implementing the conference-process writing approach in the daily classroom curriculum. The book is divided into two parts, primary (K-2) and elementary, with both sections including chapters on launching the approach, getting started, classroom organization, the conference, the writing time, programming and evaluation, and comments about the improvements observed in areas other than writing. Each chapter provides an explanation of the subtopic accompanied by actual reports from teachers about what was evidenced in their classrooms. The use of bold face headings, numbering, and listing highlights the most important information for the reader and enables quick review of the material. Although the book is written for primary and upper elementary teachers, the bulk of the information is contained within the K-2 section because, in part, the philosophy of the project is that the process of writing must begin in these early years. An upper elementary teacher will find it necessary to read both sections in order to completely understand the approach.

For the teacher who says, "Sure, the process-conference approach sounds wonderful in theory, but how does it really work in the classroom?" this book will answer the questions in more than one way. Each chapter contains numerous teacher comments that give the book credibility. The teachers tell the strategies they attempted at each stage of the writing process and the results. Through these teacher reports, the reader gets the feeling of active participation rather than passive observation. The reader will also recognize there is no one way to teach writing but, in fact, many ways to obtain the desired result—children who write. One does not have to be an English teacher to recognize and understand the value of these workable techniques that encourage students to be writers.

I recommend this book to elementary teachers who enjoy writing, who value writing as it relates to reading and who want to teach writing daily. I also recommend it to the skeptical teacher who dislikes teaching writing, who never has time for anything except the reading textbook and who balks at the thought of trying something new. This book could make a difference in the way teachers and students come to view writing and its importance in their lives. *No Better Way to Teach Writing!*—an appropriate title for an excellent book.

Sandra L. Frazier
is a Gifted Program specialist in the Pittsylvania County Schools.

Donald M. Murray. *Learning By Teaching*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1982, 192 pp., $9.00. Reviewed by Paul Brumfield.

Henry Miller once wrote, "Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery." Miller's statement could serve as the theme of Donald Murray's *Learning By Teaching*. In this book of selected articles on writing and teaching, Murray confirms that writing is indeed a voyage of discovery, not only for the student of writing but also for the teacher. The book offers no magical solution to the writing teacher's problems. But the reader does not expect any because in the preface Murray writes that he wants his articles to be "more questions than answers." In fact, he seems almost apologetic when he writes that "the articles, for good or bad, reflect how I thought and felt and wrote at the time they were written" (Preface). Although the book has its flaws, it is still worth reading. Despite some annoying repetitiveness, Murray presents a clear, accurate description of the writing process and suggestions for improving writing instruction, some hard to accept without adaptation but many that are useful.

Murray devotes the first part of his book to a description of his concept of the writing process. He contends that writing is not the recording of a discovery but the very act of exploration itself. He captures the essence of the writing process in one sentence: "A writer is an individual who uses language to discover meaning in experience and communicate it" (p. 8).

According to Murray, to be successful a writer must effectively pass through three stages. Rather than prewriting, writing, and rewriting, Murray prefers to use the terms prevision, vision, and revision in describing the composition process. His explanations are clear enough so that teachers without special training in the writing process can easily comprehend them. Prevision, according to Murray, includes everything that precedes the first draft. He devotes a large portion of *Learning By Teaching* to the discussion of this stage, one he believes warrants more attention since "at least 70% of the writing process takes place before the completed first draft" (p. 51).

The second stage, the one requiring the least amount of time, is vision. This is simply the completion of the first draft, and it is here that "the writer stakes out a territory to explore" (p. 73). After they complete this stage, writers go through the revision stage by confirming, altering, or developing, usually through numerous drafts, what they have suggested in the first draft. Murray makes a clear distinction between internal revision, "everything writers do to discover and develop what they have to say," and external revision, "what writers do to communicate what they have found they have written to another audience" (p. 77). The book provides an excellent checklist of questions to help writers clarify meaning through the process of revision.

According to Murray, writing teachers have five major responsibilities. Their primary one is to create a proper psychological and physical environment. Murray, a teacher at the University of New Hampshire, describes the writing laboratory there, one that includes twenty-four typewriters, a hollow square of movable tables, good lighting and good sound-proofing, a 40-foot long wall of corkboard for articles on writing, four file cabinets, a library on writing, and comfortable chairs. Secondary teachers operating on reduced budgets and in crowded classrooms may have a hard time controlling their laughter when they read that "the psychological implications of this writing laboratory... can be duplicated in the ordinary classroom" (p. 143). Murray believes that teachers, once they have created a favorable environment, must impose and enforce deadlines and "create artificial pressure which makes the student commit himself on paper again and again and again" (p. 143). The teacher's third responsibility is to cultivate a climate where failure is acceptable so that the student can learn "to shape the failure of his drafts into the successes of his final copy" (p. 143). Murray advises the writing teacher to eliminate grades on individual pieces of writing since good marks delude students into thinking that an early draft is a final copy and bad ones convince students that there is no hope. The fourth responsibility of writing teachers is to be diagnosticians. They should read only those papers on which students are having trouble, papers selected by the students themselves. In Murray's opinion, effective teachers do not correct papers but simply listen to students as they propose solutions and then suggest alternate treatments. The final responsibility of teachers is to write and fail with their students, a necessary act if they are to gain their respect.

Along with capturing the essence of the writing process and the process of teaching it, *Learning By Teaching* has several other strengths. Much of Murray's theory is supported by studies from other writing authorities, researchers like Janet Emig and Richard Larson, for instance. Furthermore, Murray enhances the validity of his philosophy with quotes from famous writers who have described their composing processes. But Murray's book is not just theory. He uses sample papers to illustrate concepts, and in addition to excellent lists of questions to assist in revision, he provides helpful guidelines for conducting conferences with students. Nor does Murray avoid the harsh reality of evaluation, a common concern of both students and teachers. He lists criteria a teacher can use for grading both the process and the product. The only proposal that some teachers might reject is that of deferring evaluation until the end of the writing course. They might not want to cope with the pressure created by parental demands for periodic grades and the resulting heavy workload at the end of a term.

Despite apparent shortcomings, *Learning By Teaching* has two important messages that can prove valuable to the writing teacher: the need for teachers to be honest to themselves and students and the necessity to remain student themselves. Murray maintains that instructors must stop deceiving themselves. They must not envision themselves as "a modern Moses who brings the tablets... down from the mountain each day" (p. 116). Instead, they should realize that there is no great body of knowledge to lug into class, only a few simple principles of writing that students must discover themselves through writing. Furthermore, writing teachers must be perennial students. They should listen and learn from their students, for they "are experiencing the writing process" and "understand it better than we can" (p. 150). Moreover, teachers, according to Murray, must continue to write and to share their own struggles with their classes. It is hard to find fault with this advice. The instructor who follows it and the other suggestions set forth in *Learning By Teaching* will, in Murray's own words, "not be a teacher, he will be a senior learner, what a teacher ought to be" (p. 138).

Paul Brumfield
teaches at Tunstall High School in Pittsylvania County, Virginia.

The *Teachers Teaching Writing* videotapes and discussion guides are available for purchase, rental, and preview from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Dept. 1153, 225 N. Washington St., Alexandria, Virginia 22314 (Phone: 303-549-9110). Reviewed by Robert L. Gilstrap.

This is my fifteenth year as a teacher educator, and I still have many of the same frustrations that I had at the beginning of my career. My major frustration is trying to teach undergraduate methods without having any children available for demonstration. I can, of course, try to model the methods with my classes of college juniors and then hope they apply these strategies when they go out into the real world. I also send them out into the schools to observe and to participate and then return to share with the class what they have done. But each student is assigned to a different school and when they tell what they did, we all have very different mental images of what it was really like.

However, *Teachers Teaching Writing*, a new set of videotapes, has helped me provide in-common experiences for my students. The six videotapes and discussion guides present outstanding teachers (Grades 3-12) at work in their own classrooms. All of the teachers featured in the series are at the forefront of new developments in their fields. They provide a first-hand look at the writing process in action.

National Writing Project directors nominated seventy master teachers to appear in the *Teachers Teaching Writing* programs; four were ultimately selected by a board whose members included Donald Graves, James Gray, and Bruce Joyce. These four teachers were taped on location in their own classrooms by a professional television crew over a period of several weeks. Drafts of the program were then field-tested for three years in inservice courses conducted through the National Writing Project and schools across the country. Produced through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to George Mason University and Fairfax County Public Schools, the project's goal was to use television to present the work of outstanding teachers of writing to education students and classroom teaches all across the country.

Each of the programs presents a regularly scheduled class recorded live on location. None of the scenes was rehearsed, and none of the action was staged or simulated. The instructional sequence is presented from start to finish, just as it happened. Explanatory narration is provided as the programs proceed, but not so much that it interferes with the viewer's sense of observing the classroom in person.

Each of the tapes documents a complete classroom writing process and is capable of standing alone in a single inservice session or education class. The tapes are "Flight: Writing for a Classroom Research Project," "Writing and Sharing: Journals, Peer Editing, and Publishing with Parents," "Bones: Reading and Writing Poetry," "Puppet Plays: Writing and Revising with Partners," and "Writers: Developing Confidence in the Young Writer."

Although I have used all of the tapes in either my undergraduate or my graduate courses in curriculum and instruction, the one that I have used most often is "Flight," which features Suzanne Brady, a fourth and fifth grade teacher in Monterey, California. This tape shows her students moving through the complete writing process as they research, compose, revise, and share full-scale reports on the history of flight and aviation. The tape illustrates a writing across the curriculum project with applications to the 4th through the 12th grade.

I have used this tape in my social studies methods class to meet several purposes:

(1) to illustrate the structure of an instructional unit from initiation to culmination,

(2) to introduce students to the various stages of the writing process from pre-writing to sharing,

(3) to demonstrate the use of small writing response groups as a way of improving student writing,
(4) to analyze the behavior of the teacher as a facilitator of learning,
(5) to examine the reactions of children to the process that they are moving through, and
(6) to help my students better understand how a research project can be written with consideration given to the process of writing as well as the final product.

Student reactions to the videotapes have been positive, and the videotapes are the best materials that I currently have available. They meet my four major criteria for selecting films and tapes. They are of high quality, reveal the stages in the process, provide insight into what the teacher is thinking, and show the classroom as close to reality as possible. Videotapes such as these should be a model for other film producers.

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is Professor of Early and Middle Education at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. He is also associate director of the Northern Virginia Writing Project.

John S. Mayher, Nancy Lester, and Gordon Pradl. *Learning to Write/Writing to Learn.* Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1983, 152 pp., $8.25.

As the title indicates, *Learning to Write/Writing to Learn* provides a basic guide to writing as a way of learning, strengthening its argument by drawing the reader into an expanded notion of what writing is and how it is created. As one reads through the chapters, the ideas seem at first only a synthesis of masters like Elbow, Emig, Murray, Graves, Britton, and Moffett. But upon closer study, there is more to the book than a litany of already published ideas. Mayher, Lester, and Pradl use their own means of organization to extend the dialogue of previous masters to present concerns. The book is like a long description of what a good writing class, writing group, or writing institute can be.

The "good" writing class that the book describes permits and encourages a good deal of talking and interaction while students are working on writing drafts. Rather than seeing the composing stage as a time for solitary, independent work, they describe even this stage as a time to elaborate, clarify, and discuss ideas with one's self and with others. Britton states that "writing floats on a sea of talk." Writing is aimed at and, therefore, must be sensitive to a speech community. The authors stress that students can find purposes for their writing and make those purposes more relevant when they are encouraged to discuss and clarify ideas with other writers. Providing this kind of environment allows the teacher to build on the relationship between speech and writing, paralleling the school with a home situation. The authors frequently discuss the "recursiveness" of the writing process—that is, the on-going process of generating, clarifying, and elaborating ideas. A teacher who permits students to write within a social context promotes what the authors and Peter Elbow term "percolating" (or prewriting) throughout the writing process.

From a framework that regards "fluency, clarity, and correctness" as three benchmarks of successful writing, the book gives assignment ideas, writing samples, and assumptions about writing and teaching it. Quotations from writing teachers, writers, and theorists that further illustrate arguments for using particular strategies are also interspersed throughout the text. The book is not only a blend of motivating ideas for the creative writer or teacher, it is also a book of arguments, models, and staff development suggestions for the reader to use with other teachers. In particular, the chapter "Writing to Learn Across the Curriculum" includes suggested ways to present ideas to a faculty. Thus the audience for this book is those unique teachers who teach writing, write themselves, and also work with other teachers to get them to use more writing in their classrooms.

Stephanie McConachie
has worked extensively with writing across the curriculum in Williamsburg/James City County Schools.

A Resolution on Condemning the Use of Writing as Punishment

Approved by the NCTE Board of Directors at the 1984 Annual Business Meeting

This resolution stems from a concern that the use of writing assignments as punishment remains widespread, despite its ill effects on student attitudes toward the learning of this important life skill. Proposers of the resolution cited a national survey of teachers showing that 54 percent of respondents were aware of "the presence of assigning writing to punish students or to extinguish unacceptable behavior."

The aims of sound writing instruction are defeated when teachers and administrators of elementary and secondary schools—and even officers in the judicial system—assign copywork or themes as punishment, the proposers said. They added that both research and English teachers' experience confirm that students who have experienced punitive writing assignments form negative attitudes toward writing.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English condemn punitive writing assignments:

that NCTE discourage teachers, administrators, and others from making a punishment of such writing as copywork, sentence repetition, original paragraphs and themes, and other assignments which inhibit desired attitudes and essential communication skills; and

that NCTE disseminate this opinion to the appropriate audiences, including the general public.

NCTE Actions: Resolution and letter to leaders of pertinent organizations, including National School Boards Association, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; request for NEA and AFT to give attention to the issue in their periodicals.

Suggested Member Action: Circulate the resolution, perhaps with letter from affiliate leaders, among principals, parent-teacher organizations state and local administrators' organizations, and state and local NEA and/or AFT; propose district-level policies discouraging writing as punishment; raise the issue at faculty meetings, pointing to the NCTE resolution and research on the effects of writing apprehension on student performance.

Your VATE Officers

Editors' Note: We thought you might like to get to know your VATE officers, not only as professionals but also as people; so we asked them to write something about themselves and send us a picture. In the next issue, we'll introduce you to the other four.

Jacqueline Bryant
President

Beliefs and lessons are much the same as classroom rules. The fewer one has, the higher the probability that they can be remembered and enforced. Recall our first list of class procedures and original sins. Were there ten or twenty on that spirit duplicator? How many, after losing the list somewhere during the semester, did we use? Perhaps the first three withstood the tests of longevity and unpredictability.

So as not to have my history repeat itself, I'll follow the same course of action and leave you with three of my hard earned and longlasting, guideposts.

1. From a family of hardworking and ambitious dreamers, I've learned that dreams are more than a mental activity. They are for realizing and actualizing. Place inadequacies, inconveniences, and setbacks in full view for humility, tolerance, patience, and forgiveness. Concentrate on strengths, convictions, and possibilities. Propel toward goals with as much honesty, faith, and fury that 86,400 seconds a day will allow.
2. From a colorful cadre of students, I've learned to believe that they are truly our last hope for our future. They have taught me a philosophy of education, helped me to whittle down my list of class/life rules, and encouraged me to aspire to heights I'd not dared—all with the trust, hope, and nourishment they gave unconditionally.
3. From a loyal and persevering group of colleagues, I've gleaned that education is not a job but a commitment; that in order to create life-long learners, we must be life-long learners; but mostly, that teachers and education are indeed our greatest treasures—worth every effort to protect and defend.

I could change the name and relate this same story to any number of you. It's not unique. It's not noble. It's not even particularly profound. It is, however, personal and sincere. It is that struggle for meaning for which we are challenged all our lives.

Chris B. Hopkins
Secretary

Jim Croce's "Time In a Bottle" captures the spirit and outlook of my life, professionally and personally. With each year, I have found more outlets for my energies! I especially value the professional friendships that have resulted from my work in the Virginia Beach Association of Teachers of English.

My professional growth has been further challenged by the offices I have held and the special interest groups I have attended in the Virginia Beach branch of the American Association of University Women.

However, my major outside interest is my family: Jackie, age 14, who fills any possible voids in my day and Dan, my husband, who props me up at the end of each day. Additionally, I love reading (my most recent favorite author is Kate Chopin who wrote a "You must read" novel entitled *The Awakening*), boating (despite an "Outward Bound'-type trip to Annapolis last summer in a 19' motorboat), and sitting, walking, collecting shells and playing on the beach.

"If I could make days last forever..." is a wish I share with the late Jim Croce.

H. Thomas Callahan
Secondary Member-at-Large

The usual English teacher interests are mine too. I enjoy literature, movies, travel, and even writing—once I've broken the barrier of getting started. My not-so-secret vice is playing around with words to invent puns.

One of the most fulfilling experiences I have teaching is to motivate a student to accomplish something special. I like seeing people discover and use their dormant talents.

As for my educational background, I grew up on a farm in Southside Virginia, attended public schools in Mecklenburg County, majored in English at the University of Richmond, and continued with graduate work in education at William and Mary and Old Dominion University. Since '62 I have taught English at Deep Creek High School in Chesapeake.

Carolyn Hinson
Junior High/Middle School
Member-at-Large

Last year our faculty took the Myers-Briggs Personality Profile. The test revealed that I am an INTJ, letters which say I am an intuitive introvert who bases decisions on logic and who structures time carefully. I'm not sure that the test summarizes me, but it explains, I think, why I sometimes like solitary activities—writing and reading, running and hiking alone so I have time to think.

Recently, I have turned three particular interests, Appalachian studies, hiking, and writing, into a project: the writing of a young adult novel. Because I have had a continuing interest in storytelling, folk life, and crafts, and because I've lived in the mountains all my life, I feel that I have an understanding of the Appalachians that is sometimes lacking in young people's literature. I'm not sure I've succeeded, but I hope I've given a true picture of Appalachian life. Within the story, my main character, Willi Dean, hikes on the Appalachian Trail. Some of her hiking experiences are mine, for I've done a lot of short hikes and one long-distance hike, the Long Trail, a 360-mile trail through the Green Mountains of Vermont. Through fiction writing, I know I have become a better writer and I hope a more careful observer. No matter what I'm doing, whether it's working in the vegetable garden or with my herbs or looking through flea markets for antiques, I want to see creatively.

NCTE to Stage Summer Workshops on Literature, Thinking, Computers

Topics of three Summer Workshops, to be sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English next July and August, reflect top concerns of teachers of secondary school English today. The three-and-a-half-day sessions will focus on teaching literature, teaching students to think, and computer assisted instruction. The schedule for these workshops, to be held at the Illini Tower Conference Center on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign, is as follows:

Ideas for Teaching Literature: July 22-25. Larry Johannessen, an English and social studies teacher at Lyons Township High School, La Grange, Illinois, and invited instructor at the University of Chicago.

Teaching of Thinking in High School English Programs: July 29-August 1. John Bushman, University of Kansas associate professor of English Education, and consultant editor for *Thinking Through Language*, a forthcoming NCTE series of booklets.

Using Computers in the Secondary English Program: August 12-15. Sally Standiford, assistant professor of quantitative methods and computer science at the College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota.

The limited-enrollment events offer teachers an opportunity to learn from nationally known specialists in these aspects of English, confer with colleagues from throughout the United States and Canada, and earn three continuing education units.

The registration for one workshop (including room and board) is $300. A $50 deposit is required for a reservation. For further details, write Summer Workshops Information, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.